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Short Circuits

by Sara Levine

Why do women write so few aphorisms? he asked me. Why do men write so many?

I can give you my psychology in a nutshell: me *inside* a nutshell, listening for the nutcracker's approach.

I tend to choose narcissists as my friends; that way I don't worry that they're talking about me behind my back.

Whoever said "it was a face only a mother could love" had failed to meet some of our mothers.

I broke up with that boyfriend in order to feel close to him.

Brevity is power, so I make my fictions shorter. The novel became a story, the story became a flash fiction, the flash fiction became an aphorism, but it was little more than a spore. At least when brevity is *not* power, it reduces the duration of your failure.

She was always saying she would be happy to be a vegetarian, if it weren't for her husband, who had to have his meat. He was always saying he would be happy to give up wine, if it weren't for his wife, who loved her drink. And so they ate meat and drank wine till the end of their days, each convinced that they lived well only for the sake of the other.

I *know* that man is a mine of information; every time he speaks, I'm buried alive.

I found her remarks so appalling I did my best to sustain the friendship. Not because I enjoyed her, but because I enjoyed my capacity to *be appalled*.

I'm ignorant of almost everything. But is that a reason to learn?

When my husband was a child, his family kept a few farm animals as pets. One day the cow was gone and a steak was on the table. "But Melody would want you to eat her," his mother said. And so it always is—the winner's tongue in the loser's mouth.

However many holy words you read, what good will they do until you share them with another human being and show how superior you are?

My favorite writer's work has had lots of imitators, but thankfully, they imitated the wrong thing.

Can you be joyed? Or only overjoyed?

I was running on the street in shorts and a tank top when a car approached, its window rolled down. Hearing the loud, insolent jabber of a man's voice, I thought: he's about to harass me. But no, he was talking on a cell phone, oblivious to my presence. I'm reconciled to hearing phones ring in the street and seeing people with earpieces talking to themselves, but are even the *incivilities* of life disappearing?

I never judge other mothers, even when I notice they're doing everything wrong.

I often wish I'd read Heidegger—which is not the same thing as wanting to read him now.

Free-range hens don't leave the yard.

I learned to forgive his faults—and then, more happily, to forgive his faults in another friend's presence. I don't want to simply forbear; I want to be *known* as forbearing.

No, my husband admitted, his mother *didn't* always mean well, but in the interest of everybody getting along, he expected me to assume the best about her whenever possible. I was dismayed. If I'm going to take the moral high road, I'll go there on my own; I certainly don't want directions.

I expect nothing from the world except its delight in me.

A series of aphorisms, however well executed, is torture to get through, with the possible exception of books where one aphorism only is printed on each page. Then the field of white space relaxes the eye, and in the luxury of the pause, one realizes how deeply one wants to throw the book across the room.

Willpower is like Jesus; it dies so it can be resurrected.

If we establish that I'm good for nothing, am I free to do whatever I want?