

Excerpt from *The Runt*
(*A Novel in Stories*)

The morning sun draws golden ribbons across her arms. She turns her head to watch him sleep—the best time to really see a man in his truest form. When the woes of the world have yet to set into the space across his brow, or grip the muscles between his shoulders into a terror that runs along his back, down to his thighs and causes his knees to snap when he walks, and the soles of his feet to throb in pain.

She raises her golden-laced fingers and caresses the side of his face. At her touch, he shifts and drapes his arm across her body with a contented moan. She turns her back to him as he pulls her in close, the space made just for her, the one that no other woman could ever fit.