

## CANCELLED

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The face in question is broad and shaped like an apricot. The nose curves at the grade of a challenging ski slope. The chin has a gentle crease. The eye sockets are shallow and wide. The cheekbones are sharp where they meet the border of the projected vector map.

She knew your face would work, Kristen tells Nina. She used facial recognition software so you could see inside.

Nina frowns. Wrinkles form that may prevent her face from functioning as a password.

How do you know Gina's will is in the computer?

She told me once.

Did you try? You're our mother. Maybe your face will work.

I tried. Kristen rubs her cheeks as if to mold her bones. I'm only half her. You're all her.

I have this mole. Her fingernails were shinier. Do you think my nose is longer?

I used to have trouble telling you apart.

Really?

When you were little girls. You ran the same before you grew into your bones, with a tiny flail in your back step. So cute. When you grew up, I could tell who was walking from a hundred feet away. Your walk is kind of terse. Hers is different. Fluid.

I smoked, Nina says, feeling her crow's feet.

Try using Gina's makeup.

Mom.

Just try. We don't know what's inside. Maybe there's a letter to me. Kristen's sadness pours from her like tea from a pot. Her eyes are deep and marine. Nina drinks.

Let me think about it.

Promise me that when you think of your sister, you'll think good.

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When Gina was a child, she thought trees were always fully formed underground and pushed up instead of growing. She thought of saplings not as small but as incompletely born. More and more of the tree touched air over the course of its life. Nina felt her strange twin was like this tree. The girl never grew. She was exposed to more of the world but was always a finished being.

They exchanged no words between 2011 and 2015. Nina attended Gina's wedding in 2015 but lapsed back into cavey silence. Nina told people they were sick of each other after twenty years attached at the hip. The truth was a thornier briar.

Some objects understand the pain of being a twin better than humans. Sweet things like cherries and Kit Kats come in twos for the company. Some twins work together like headlights and earrings. Apart they are usable fragments. Then there are twins which become useless when separated. Skis and crutches and the halves of scissors. When they lose a half, they lose a whole.

Those eight years aged Nina more than regular time. Her job did not supply sufficient distraction. Her boyfriend, Jon, did not understand because he had three brothers but no twin. Nina's joints began creaking like wind through winter boughs. Her fingernails and bones softened. Her hair narrowed into wispy fibers. Yet she was unwilling to call Gina.

She read about identical twins who were adopted by different, separate families. When they reunited in their forties, they found remarkable similarities. Both had independently been named Kim. Both married and divorced men named Franklin. Both had one daughter who played violin. Both smoked Parliament Reds. One worked for the United States Postal Services and one for FedEx. Both drove Toyotas.

Nina and Gina had no such similarities. In eight years they diverged more than two people ever had. Shared interests in music and sea life were left behind. Their culinary preferences changed. The men they loved were very different. Jon hated his job and Gina's husband, Rusty, was a wealthy computer scientist. All this created a psychic chasm deeper and longer than a continent.

As children, the girls could feel each other in space from miles apart. It felt like embracing a cloud. They sometimes made this connection in the early days of their separation. When one probed, the other looked up from their book and smiled. This happened less and less. Shortly before Gina's death, Nina tried to reach for her sister and found not a hole but a cold

wall made of stone.

Hold still, a computer technician instructs Nina. I don't know how many chances we have before the system locks us out.

If she wanted me in, I'll get in. Nina massages her jawline. Her stomach muscles quiver. She avoided mirrors after applying Gina's makeup but now sees herself onscreen. The resemblance is creepy. Remarkable how a film of crushed seashells can rock her self-assurance.

A net of green vectors spreads on Nina's face. She feels caught. Her muscles stiffen. She watches her sister looking back from the computer. The cold lasers project into her a quiet fear.

A harsh tone. Didn't work, the technician mutters. I'll try reducing vector passes to expand the eigenface.

The what?

The eigenface. It's essentially your map, based on vectors and proportions. He summons a shadowy and blurred face. Somewhere inside it she can see both herself and Gina. The image is unsettling and vague.

Let's try one more time. The green map spreads again. They try four more times. A pleasant beep indicates their entry.

The technician hands Nina a thumb drive. Everything Gina left can fit inside a drive the size of a stick of gum.

Matching with facial recognition software requires 99.99% similarity. Nina's distance from her sister's digital ghost is only 0.01. That much belongs to her only. Applied to her body, that means only 5.4 grams are unique. Dr. Duncan MacDougall's theory of the soul states a person's immortal being weighs 21 grams. That much is released from the body in death. When Nina dies, she will be 15 grams in the red.

Gina's desktop background is a smoldering volcano. Nina wishes she wasn't familiar with the image. It's the cover of *Dianetics: The Modern Science of Mental Health* by L. Ron Hubbard. Below the volcano are two folders. One is labeled, My Will and Testament. The other is labeled, My Memories. What can Nina do? She opens the memories.

The folder points to an external hard drive containing terabytes of data inside folders bearing the names of years. 2015 through 2019. Inside 2015 are folders named after months. Inside June is a list of video files named after days. One for every day of the year. She clicks June first.

A video player swallows the screen. Nina's breath is stolen from her mouth. She sees her own legs kicked onto a yellow ottoman. Behind them are the bright windows of Rusty's modern home. Succulents catch the

morning sun. Nina sees the bridge of her own nose. No, it's too short. The bridge of Gina's nose. She watches Gina's slender hand raise a book titled *Have You Lived Before This Life?* There must be a camera inside her thick eyeglasses. The frame moves minutely as Gina skims the book. Nina tries to follow along.

The camera mounted inside Gina looks up. Nina hears footsteps in her headphones. In the hallway, Nina sees a shadow approaching. Her stomach jerks. Moisture flees her mouth. She sees herself enter the room. The mole above her lip. The tense walk. She sees Gina wave.

June 1, 2015. Years after they stopped talking. Nina has no memory of this day. She's sure this never happened. Yet, she's watching it happen.

At the other end of the room, Rusty walks into view. He strolls over and sits next to Gina. He does not acknowledge Nina in the doorway. He takes Gina's hand.

Don't you know your mother's in the kitchen? What are you doing in here all alone? Gina looks over to Nina near the door. Nina watches herself smile in response.

What are you looking at?

The camera turns back to him. Nothing, she answers. No one.

Nina stood like an eagle and watched green light swallow her fingers. Rings of green moved up her hands and sliced through her arms. The machine whirred. The camera whirred.

Gina had paid \$8,000 to rent a three-dimensional imaging rig for her wedding. Each guest was subjected to the strange process of capturing 'digital memories.' The machine rendered and saved Kristen's silver dress, cousin Tyra's baby bump, and Nina's sour expression.

Nina was determined not to address the four-year estrangement. It was not anyone's fault. The ceremony wasn't even that bad—sure, the part where the Scientology official overlapped their rings to form the 'ARC triangle' or whatever was weird, but some of what he said resonated. Nina replayed a strange, sticky passage from the ceremony in her head: Life is stark and often somewhat grim, and tiredness and fret and pain and sickness do beget a state of mind where spring romance is far away and dead.

Just a quick congrats and a drink with Jon in the corner. She would not get stuck.

But what were digital memories? The photographer said her likeness

was now replicated by data. She could be reproduced and manipulated like a doll. She could be put in a room with her cousin who lived in Guinea or made to play racquetball with Princess Di.

Nina combed her mind for knots while she danced the Electric Slide. She kept getting the footsteps wrong. A reunion with her sister should not have been overshadowed by some sudden and unidentifiable insecurity. On the surface, her mind was trying to distract her from the digital capturing with the complicated dance. On a deeper level, it was trying to distract her from thoughts of Gina with thoughts of the 3D rig. She remembered how the lasers crawled her arms.

Nina's mother approached with a Manhattan for her daughter. Jon scurried to the bathroom.

Have you two spoken yet?

I signed the guest book. Nina slurped the boozy drink.

What'd you write? Nina saw little flames of drunkenness in her mother's eyes. When Kristen drank, she wanted things. When she wanted things, she said so.

Something lovely. I don't remember. Something about peace and understanding. Something about blessings from ancient aliens.

Nina! Kristen clicked her tongue. That's not nice. Kristen picked at her fingernails.

What do you want, mom? I see the wheels turning in your brain.

You know I've always been closer with you. It's just that...

Spit it out.

That Rusty. He's so...wealthy.

And?

If you and Gina were speaking, we'd all be closer. You could make sure they provide for me. I won't always be this spry. Kristen's face flushed with shame and wine. Things are tough right now. Financially.

I know, mom. But I'm not going to winch a broken-down relationship from the muck for your retirement fund. Nina finished her drink.

Why won't you tell me? Why aren't you talking? What did she do?

It wasn't so much what she did. More what she became. Nina spotted Jon bouncing over from the bar. She needed him to empty his glass and hit the road.

And what she continues to be, Nina added. And what I was, and how I am. I don't know.

She was reaching her saturation point. A disco ball sent green lasers

springing through the dance hall. She blinked each time they flickered past. Disquiet was building in the room. Questions. Lights.

It's called augmented reality, the technician explains. Your sister had a chronic habit of finding her sensory perceptions insufficient. She called everyday life her 'corporeal world,' and I helped her find ways to improve it. The technician is strangely confident in describing something undermining of Nina's notion of body and self. He seems proud to have ripped part of her away.

Only Gina would've seen things that way, Nina replies. No one else would see or smell something and say the experience wasn't...thorough enough. Only Gina could conceive of there being alternatives.

That's the point of what we created. She lived in a world of alternatives. Anything could be added or switched.

How did she change the world? They sit in Rusty's breakfast nook. Nina has decided she can't be near a computer for this conversation. Since finding the videos, she has felt electronic energy everywhere. Every laptop and phone emits foul waves of memory.

She added you. She could've made anything. She could've slept with George Clooney or given herself antlers. All she cared about was adding you.

What do you mean?

Your digital likeness was captured at her wedding. Your mother helped us capture your voice by recording phone conversations. We remade you.

Nina's mouth feels like a denim pocket. Her stomach quakes.

How did she see me?

Did you notice that she began wearing glasses after her wedding? Of course you didn't. The technician speaks of Gina in a protective manner, like a dog describing its owner. Those glasses weren't prescription. They contained a tiny HD camera. The lenses were screens. I wrote a code that mapped her environment and allowed her realistic interplay. Beyond augmentations, Gina had me design entire worlds where you could be together. New places.

So all this time—

All this time, he interrupts.

I was with her?

No. The technician seems irritated. She was with you. You weren't with her. Every day, she ate breakfast with you. She brought you to the

doctor. To her birthday parties.

Nina swallows. She feels like a paper sticker peeling. There's no way to keep bits of herself from staying behind. She is ripped and thin.

And the video files?

They're recordings. We captured everything and I clipped it down to a highlight reel. About an hour of footage each day. Should you watch them?

What?

Should you watch them?

I don't know. Should I?

I'm not you. I'm not your sister. I'm just a programmer. I'll give you the glasses either way, so you can be fully immersed. You'll see what she saw. You'll be her.

Nina's shadow is being shorn from her feet.

Yes. I'll do it.

Nina has read stories of twins who feel each other's deaths. They stop chopping peppers or leave work after being struck by an unfamiliar sensation. Not a bad feeling, but a strong one. Some twins have died within hours of each other from unrelated causes. Two brothers in Spain crushed their cars on trees at 3:00 p.m. on the same day. Two different cars, two different trees.

When Gina passed, Nina was helping Jon change a tire in the driveway. No quiet spirit passed over her and she felt no sensation of cold. No evaporation. Nothing strange.

When Nina found out, she mourned the death of someone who was like a fifth limb for most of her life. They shared 99% of their DNA and many memories of pain. The grief felt like release, like vomiting. Still, she wanted to feel more. The lights had been turned off years earlier.

Most of Nina's pain came from a caustic sensation of guilt. She was filled with seawater that ate into every laceration Gina left.

She's in a pine forest. The earth carries no scent from the recent rain. She's surrounded by trees wider than cars. The mulch is flat and dark where acidic needles have burned away underbrush. The space feels at once crowded and expansive. Behind every tree is an infinite growing green space.

Nina wants to look down but the camera her sister controls will not. She catches glimpses of a white dress around her legs. She doesn't like not knowing what she's wearing. Gina glances between two colossal pines. She looks up. The sky is a soft, unreal pink. Nina hears a noise in her left

earbud. Stereo sound creates the illusion of space. Someone is there. Gina will not look.

Nina sees motion between the trees. Flying things that dip and disturb branches. Grey things. String rays.

Gina's head turns left toward a dense bush overflowing with oranges. The bush rustles. Nina watches herself emerge wearing a white dress. Gina looks down. The two sisters are wearing the same dress. The augmented Nina steps closer, smiling. The branches around them are disturbed by a small breeze but Nina's digitally-imposed hair doesn't respond. Gina's arm reaches from beneath the frame. On her wrist is a silver bracelet inscribed with both their names. Nina has never seen this bracelet.

The digital Nina steps closer and takes Gina's hand. I'm happy to see you, Nina hears herself say. Her voice is cracked and tonal. A voicemail.

She's in a car. Nina watches Gina's hands wring the steering wheel. Her fingernails are smooth and strong. The freckles along her wrists are familiar in their pattern. Nina hears breathing in the passenger seat but Gina will not look over. Then she does. Nina watches herself smile back in a white dress. The one from the woods. The one from the wedding.

Why do you always make me sit in the back? Nina hears Kristen say from behind them. Gina looks back to where she slumps and pouts.

It's safer, Gina replies. The Volvo in front of them stops abruptly. Gina slams on the brakes. A screech of tires penetrates the glass but there's no burning rubber smell. Gina's arm flies out to her sister's body but passes through. Gina's eyes linger on her arm deep in Nina's chest.

Oh no! Kristen whines. I think I've got whiplash!

You're fine, mom.

Nina recognizes the Volvo. A man climbs from the front seat. Nina recognizes Jon through the double-pane of her augmentation glasses and the windshield.

Nina wills Gina not to lower the window but she does. Jon smiles when he sees Gina. The same look he gives Nina. The two are similar enough in appearance to forgive that conflation.

Gina! Oh my God. I'm so sorry. But hello. It's nice to bump into you. Ha!

Are you alone? Nina hears Gina ask from under her eyes. Jon nods. Gina's head falls and points to her lap. The camera swings up to the roof as Gina raises the glasses and rubs her eyes. When it's back in place, she wipes her hand on her jeans. Sudden tears leave dark marks.

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She recognizes this bay. The water is still, like the blue-lacquered playing floor of an endless gymnasium. The black sand is glittering with volcanic shards. The few swimmers and picnickers are guarded at both ends of the beach by towering stone coils. Red-breasted frigates bob in the surf like squawking fruit.

Nina and Gina both had vivid memories of this place from their childhood. Their mother protected its location like an embarrassing secret. The girls suspected she planned to use this information for leverage. Had Gina found the spot after their separation? Or was her memory powerful enough to support this amazing re-creation?

Nina combs the place for inconsistencies or digital flubs. The technician did beautiful work. Each grain of sand is delineated and the birds move with familiar avian grace. The stone spires fit the curves in Nina's memory. Even the soundscape is perfect.

Nina hears a voice over the hushing waves and palms. The camera is jolted as something hits Gina in the back. She looks down to see arms and legs wrapped around her body for a piggy-back ride. Nina examines the thin wrists and finds them to be her own. No matter how many times she confronts herself in in this digital world, she's surprised. Gina gallops onto the beach. Her movements are joyous but Nina finds herself unable to occupy the feeling. Gina stumbles in the sand. The pleasant day is impossible to separate now from death.

Nina's weight becomes too much and Gina topples into the sand, giggling. Grains of sand spray and settle in the folds of her clothes. Her hands dig into the basalt, which must be hot. Nina watches her digital form roll off and sprint across the sand. Her white dress whips toward the ocean. Gina raises a hand to her brow. STOP, she yells. Nina slows and turns around. Gina waves her back. A sob escapes her throat.

After joining Scientology, Gina changed by the day. Her wardrobe switched from floral print sundresses to white smocks. She rose at 5:00 a.m. instead of ten. Rusty earned their money, so she cleared a plot in the backyard for gardening and worked there all day. Her movements became fluid, her voice low and calm.

None of those transformations were bad, but they made Nina uncomfortable. She felt guilty for being upset. Their entire lives, the girls had been like two lenses in a pair of glasses. Now one eye was flattening, astigmatizing. Nina's vision blurred and she got nauseous.

Others praised Gina for her newfound industriousness and calm. Nina was increasingly unable to explain or justify her bad attitude.

Around that time, Nina found a video depicting the growth cycle of binary stars. Beginning the same size, Star One grows at a different rate and becomes larger. Star Two responds by leeching energy away until their sizes match. Not content stopping there, Star Two continues leeching until it becomes larger. Star One shrinks, then supernovas. Without its twin, Star Two bloats to a giant and follows into an explosive death.

Nina developed a nagging fear of binary star syndrome. She worried her sister had grown brighter and that she would respond by leeching. She was afraid of sharing this fear with Gina. She couldn't match her sister's growth but was too afraid of supernova to continue orbiting.

In the thousands of days since they last saw each other, their binary system never truly broke apart. Nina has been giving her sister energy and torque for years without knowing. Now, in Gina's splintered digital state, she's returning this favor. The shadow of Gina's dead star has come back.

I saw her feet dig into the sand under my weight, Nina tells the technician. Was it a simulation? Or did you find the bay?

She found the bay. It was augmented, not simulated.

What was pushing her into the sand?

Me. He seems embarrassed. That's why she cut off the memory. She said I couldn't run like you. I practiced.

You were me?

I wore a green-screen suit. She wanted to interact with you, physically.

Wait. I know you have a digital me. Do you have a digital Gina too?

Yes.

Because I'm deep in the memories but I can't see her. Sometimes she looks in a mirror but I usually only see me.

What do you want to do together?

I don't know. Nina feels flushed and hot. There are electric currents under her skin. Gina's a world ahead of me, she adds. I need to move in her direction. But I don't want to create a new world for us. I want her to be in mine.

Her reflection on the screen appears younger. Nina touches her neck. Is she being fooled by resuscitated images of her as a younger woman, or is her body actually tightening? She initiates the facial recognition process.

When the map of green lasers spreads she does not recoil. She allows them to explore her physical nooks.

A harsh noise. Nina's face has been rejected. She's been accessing memories for days without a problem. Is there a time limit to her access? Has her face changed?

Nina rubs more of Gina's foundation onto her cheekbones. The cream smells like baby powder and lemons. Kristen said the makeup was discontinued in the aughts and Gina bought a whole case. Other makeup might fool the computer but there is a chance they will not. There are only three jars left.

These days of dipping into Gina's memories have been full of syrupy love. She has entered a touching monument to sisterhood. The videos have broken Nina open like a clam and scooped out her resentment. These days have been heartbreaking and lonely and strange and rejuvenating.

Nina opens the shadowy Eigenface map. Its blank sockets stare back. Red lines surround problem zones where they do not match. The eyebrows and the mouth. Expression areas.

She tries to picture Gina. She has been living in her sister's body without seeing her face. Nina recalls the stone-set peace and confidence of a woman at her wedding. A type of grace only apparent in religious zealots. She tries to embody this woman but cannot. The computer finally lets her inside. She searches within herself for the place where Gina found her poise but there is nothing. Nina has not earned this window.

She wants you to undergo Auditing.

Wanted. And you know I don't know what that is. Nina has become increasingly irritated by her mother. Kristen is desperate to taste the worlds her daughter created. Nina feels they are private. These are worlds for sisters. That's why Gina used facial recognition software.

It's an important thing for Scientologists, Kristen says. She wants you to do it. It says so in her will. I can show you.

I believe you. Nina thinks of what her mother could be trying to gain.

Kristen wrings her wrists. I think you should do it. The Auditing. It would make her happy.

And?

And what? Nina cannot discern what Kristen wants.

What is Auditing?

She'll guide you through the process. Using the augmented reality, she'll—

Nina holds a hand up to stop her mother. This is the perfect opportunity. She will summon Gina's digital ghost with the Ouija software. She will participate in a ritual that drove them apart, caused a divergence. She will find the source of Gina's peace. It will be their shared peace. Nina feels she is standing inside the quarry from which Gina mined her resolve but cannot find any ore. She wants that metal. She wants to build.

Gina and Rusty built a chamber in their home for special rituals. Its dome of delicate white marble reaches to a skylight. The day above is dim with clouds. In the middle of the room is a table and two chairs. On the table is a plastic machine, like a clock radio, wired to two metal tubes the size and shape of pop cans.

The augmentation that composes Gina sits on one of the chairs. Nina stands near the entrance. They appear the same from that distance. She feels her body go numb as she approaches her deceased twin. Nina is robbed of form. Her limbs are not her own. A shiver runs down her back.

Gina looks up and their eyes connect. Nina is thrown back into her body. She is again whole. How did she not notice how different their eyes were? Gina's bright brown eyes are crystalline and stop light in its tracks. They shine like gems. Nina's are deeper. They let light inside and allow it to play. This fracturing of their bond gives her breathing room.

Nina feels the urge to embrace her twin. They have not touched in four years. But she does not want the computer's failure to pollute this experience. Gina rises. They wear matching dresses. This only amplifies their differences. Their faces assert individualities. Freckles and scars and blemishes ring clear. Nina feels indispensable and strong. She is no longer half but one.

Gina motions toward the empty chair. Welcome, Nina. Her voice is clear and loud in the chamber. It has no electronic fuzz like Nina's recorded voice. Nina notices the technician has added reverb to her voice so it fits the chamber. She stops and resolves to immerse herself in the experience without questioning its reality. Welcome to your Auditing session, Gina says. Please join me. I love you, Nina.

Thank you, Nina responds. She stops herself again. Do not try to converse. Do not challenge the algorithm. Be with her. She eases herself into the chair.

Gina clears her throat with a careful noise. I want you to experience Auditing because it did me so much good. During our years apart, I

located a place of security. A location we never occupied together. That fact has been tearing at my soul. Though I wish we could've reached this place together during our shared time on earth, I want the best for you now. Let me take you there. Gina's eyes shine like new pennies. She smiles. The end of her mouth turns up more than Nina's.

Please, take one can in each hand. Nina takes the metal tubes, which are warm. I'll be asking you a series of questions. You will remain aware the whole time, and after the session, you will remember everything. If, at any point, you become uncomfortable, tell me and we can stop. This is meant for your growth, Nina.

I'm ready.

Good. Let's begin. Please close your eyes. Are you hungry?

No.

Have you slept at least seven and a half hours?

Yes.

Have you consumed alcohol or drugs in the last twenty-four hours?

No.

Good. Gina examines the plastic machine. A small window shows a needle, measuring something through those wires, some energy or magnetism Nina is emitting.

In the future, when I utter the word 'cancelled,' everything I have said to you during this session will be cancelled and will have no force with you. Any suggestion I have made to you will be without force when I say the word 'cancelled.' Do you understand?

Um, yes. I think so.

We're going to find an incident of which you have an exact record. Then, by sending you through the moment several times, we're going to reduce it. Locate an incident you feel you can comfortably face.

Nina, of course, thinks of the fight. A moment she's wished for years to 'reduce.' She finds the beginning of the incident. Walking up the winding path to Nina and Rusty's home. Avoiding the stinky gingko fruit cluttering the sidewalk. Reciting an accusation over and over in her head. Clutching a bank statement sent to the wrong twin.

Go through the incident and say what's happening as you go along.

I'm waiting for you to answer the door. I'm shaking. I can feel my knees getting weak and grab the doorframe. You're there, smiling. I want to hit you. I'm yelling.

What are you yelling?

Ten thousand dollars? A month?

It would be more beneficial to your Auditing if you assume the tone and volume you used during the incident.

Ten thousand dollars? A month?

Louder.

TEN THOUSAND DOLLARS? A MONTH?

Good.

And then I'm beating you, smacking you with the bill, pushing you into the house. I'm screaming. I can't stop.

What are you saying now?

How could you throw your money away like that?

Louder.

I HAVE ONE HUNDRED AND FIFTY THOUSAND DOLLARS IN CREDIT CARD DEBT. MOM DRIVES A FIFTEEN-YEAR-OLD CAR. HOW COULD YOU THROW YOUR MONEY AWAY LIKE THAT? WHO ARE THESE PEOPLE?

What do you hear?

You're crying. Apologizing. Making promises. I don't care. I'm not listening. I'm still hitting you. Kicking you.

Have I begun to bleed?

Yes. You're in fetal position. There's some blood on your mouth.

What am I saying?

I'll stop paying them! I'll stop! I didn't know! I'm sorry! Please!

Do you stop?

Yes. I stop. I shred the bill and throw it onto you. I leave.

Do you come back?

No. I never come back.

Gina makes her sister recount the incident again. It is no easier the second time, or the third, but on the fourth, she moves through the incident with some detachment, and on the fifth, there is some amusement in her voice.

I think that's enough. Nina, come to present time.

Nina is suddenly, powerfully aware of the augmentation. The fact that an outsider would find her sitting alone in this room, cheeks crusted with dried tears, fills her with embarrassment.

Are you in present time?

Yes.

Cancelled. Gina speaks with insistence. The word rings through the chamber.

What?

CANCELLED.

Okay. Gina feels she is missing something. The incident feels no different in the fuzzy compartment of her mind. She contains no less shame and humiliation. Her potential for violence has not diminished. The osmosis of Nina's composure, fortitude, and calm that Gina expected has not occurred. What was Scientology if not the cause of Nina's transformation? Just some expensive club? All through their separation, Gina resented her sister's culty vacancy and blamed the religion. Not until her death did she begin to envy that disposition. Now, having undergone the ritual without finding the peace, she is again lost. From where? What other differences split them?

And then she remembers.

When I count from five to one and snap my fingers, you will feel alert. Five, four, three, two, one. Gina snaps. The procedure is complete. Open your eyes.

Nina sees. Her sister is gone.

You want them deleted? the technician asks. He sits on the couch, spinning a basketball on his finger. All of them? The ball rotates until its lines cannot be discerned.

Yes, Nina says. All of them. She is perched on an ottoman with her hands buried in her hair. I've already lived each one.

Jesus, the technician exclaims. He stops the ball. You already watched them all? There are a thousand files. How's that even possible?

I did. And I want them deleted.

Why?

Did she watch them? Nina asks.

What do you mean? He drops the basketball and it springs off the ground. Nina flinches. The ball thumps loudly into the wall.

Did Gina watch these files? Or did she see them in real time and save them?

I never saw her watch any of them.

Exactly. They are not meant to be replayed and replayed. I wanted to catch up with her, not gain on her. I don't need to be ahead. I'll have them still, as memories.

I never delete anything.

Please. Do it. These aren't meant to stick around.

What about her digital form? For future use? He opens a laptop and punches a few keys.

Especially her body. I need space.

Done. He reclines into the couch looking pleased with himself.

What?

It's done.

But—

It's all deleted.

Everything? Like that?

Gina is digitally gone.

Nina is flooded with a barrage of visuals, both augmented and real. Her sister laughing, plunging a canoe paddle into a river, bits of water ripping out and scattering sunlight. Her sister swaddled in a ruby quilt, crying over something they've already both forgotten. Her sister with a cast on her broken arm. Her sister painting. Her sister tweezing cactus thorns from her thumb, chewing on her tongue to distract herself from the pain.

Nina expected to feel like an independent being once everything was deleted, but now she feels a foreign object inside her body. Not an absence, but a presence. A dense clot Gina left for her to carry and sift through, day by day. Nina's body now contains everything she never knew about her twin. And it feels good.



variety of print and online literary magazines. She blogs about writing and reading at [Owrite:marilynonaroll.wordpress.com](http://Owrite:marilynonaroll.wordpress.com).

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**Colin Pope** grew up in the Adirondacks. His debut collection, *Why I Didn't Go to Your Funeral* (Tolsun Books) was a finalist for the Press 53 Award for Poetry and was released in 2019, and his manuscript *Prayer Book for an American God* was a finalist for the 2018 Louise Bogan Award, the 2018 Unicorn Press First Book Competition, and the 2019 St. Lawrence Award. His work has appeared in *Slate*, *Rattle*, *Willow Springs*, *West Branch*, *Ninth*