**Chips**

**By Kristina Riggle**

The door slam is meant to be symbolic, I can tell, one last "take that!" in our roiling argument. But that door never did fit right in the frame, so it swings back open, revealing the heel of his departing shoe and the flick of his coat as he swings around the corner. I hear his footfalls stop, and imagine him pondering a return to slam the door, for real this time. But he resumes his noisy departure, each stomp echoing in my mind as "so there, so there, so there." As he descends the apartment building stairway I think I hear a guttural growl of release or frustration, but that might be coming from a neighbor's place, or my imagination, or the crazy dude who haunts our lobby sometimes because we have no doorman.

I close the heavy door with the aid of an extra push from my hip. It is in this position, perpendicular to the door, that I spy a small black piece of plastic, half-tucked under our neglected stove. I am dumb with disbelief, to find it now? He'd torn through every piece of luggage or sack or purse in our place, including all the internal pockets of all my handbags, remarking with bewildering irritation that I should need so many tampons. He'd crawled over the floor with his nose an inch off the wood like he was inspecting for bedbugs. All of our furniture he'd upended.

It did us in, this little piece of plastic I now hold between my finger and thumb, squeezing it as if to test its very existence. I'd gotten bored with the search after the first hour, and suggested that it really wasn't so important after all, that surely he could just rewrite the last twenty pages of his novel, and anyway, isn't this a good lesson in remembering to back up your work in more than one place?

I thought he might hit me. I saw the notion of it cross his mind in his widening eyes, the intake of breath and the angle forward of his shoulders. As my body pumped out fear hormones, my mind thought, Good, smack me one, then I can leave you. Instead he stepped back, his eyes going from an aggressive roundness to the narrow sneer I had grown accustomed to. "Oh sure, I'll just whip it right up. Would you like fries with that? Oh, I'm sorry, I mean natural cut chips?"

My shift at the deli started in fifteen minutes. My hairnet was in my pocket. He turned away to resume the ransacking of our place, which he never did clean up. I was the one who set the furniture back to rights, and sealed up everything he'd ripped open, when I got home from working six hours steeped in the smell of onions and salty meat slices.

I perform a quarter-turn to our kitchen sink, let the last twenty pages of his novel drop, and flip the switch which I assume is the garbage disposal, never having used it before. I turn my face to avoid potential shrapnel as my phone chimes for a text.

If you find the flash drive, mail it to my parents, he commands.

I reply as the crunching of the disposal becomes a high-pitched, empty whine: Would you like that with natural cut chips?