

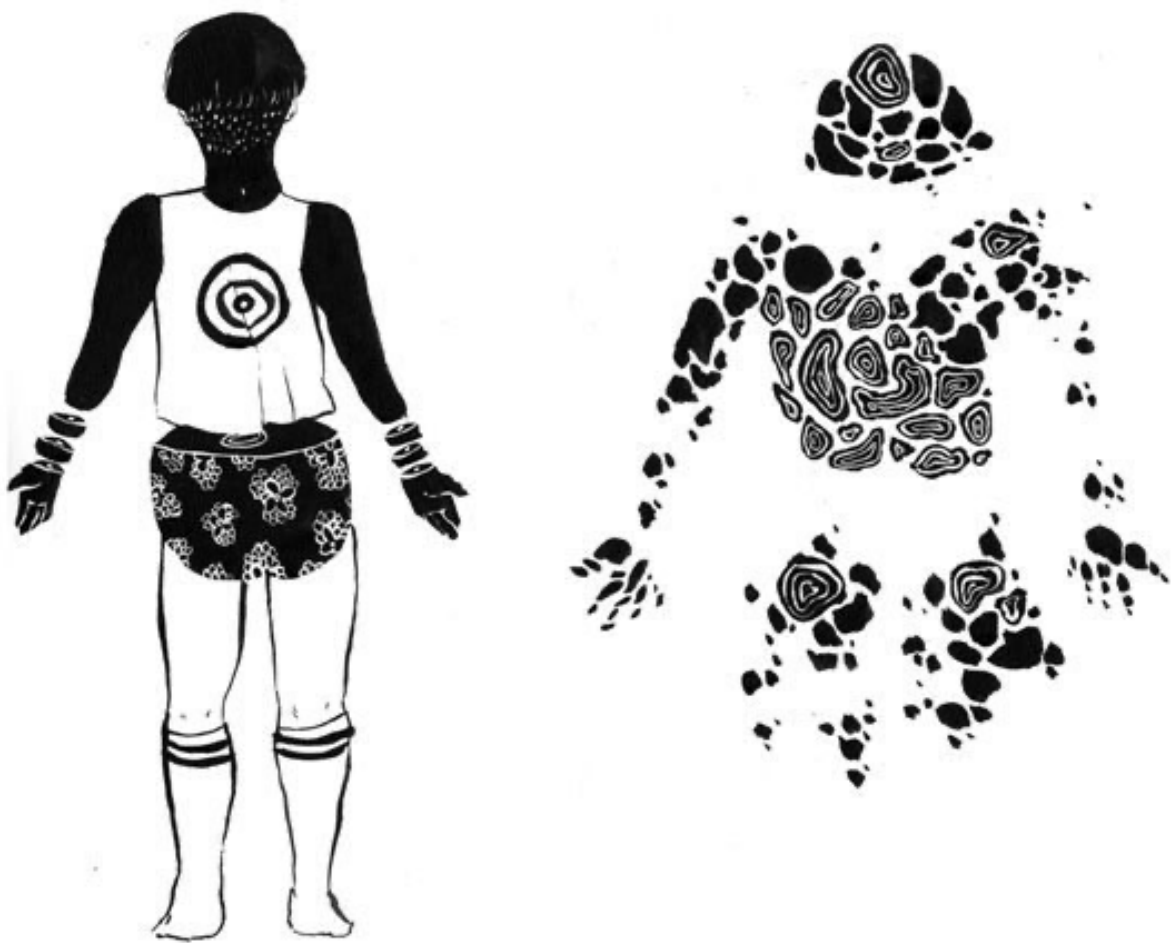
ation by Jeannie Phan

FICTION

Five Short Stories

A STORY OF STOLEN SALAMIS

My son's Italian landlord in Brooklyn kept a shed out back in which he cured and smoked salamis. One night, in the midst of a wave of petty vandalism and theft, the shed was broken into and the salamis were taken. My son talked to his landlord about it the next day, commiserating over the vanished sausages. The landlord was resigned and philosophical, but corrected him: 'They were not sausages. They were salamis.' Then the incident was written up in one of the city's more prominent magazines as an amusing and colourful urban incident. In the article, the reporter called the stolen goods 'sausages'. My son showed the article to his landlord, who hadn't seen it. The landlord was interested and pleased that the magazine had seen fit to report the incident, but he added: 'They weren't sausages. They were salamis.'

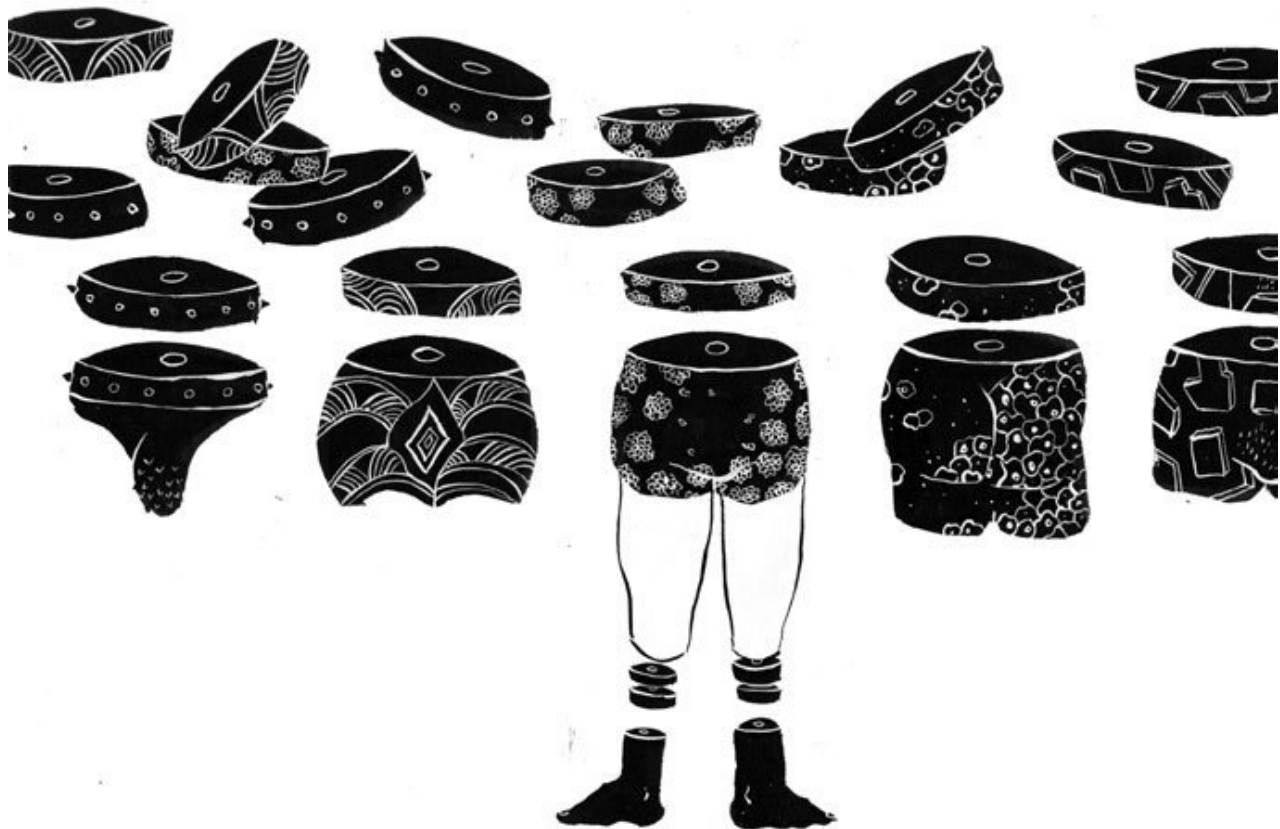


A STORY TOLD TO ME BY A FRIEND

A friend of mine told me a sad story the other day about a neighbour of hers. He had begun a correspondence with a stranger through an online dating service. The friend lived hundreds of miles away, in North Carolina. The two men exchanged messages and then photos and were soon having long conversations, at first in writing and then by phone. They found that they had many interests in common, were emotionally and intellectually compatible, were comfortable with each other and were physically attracted to each other, as far as they could tell on the Internet. Their professional interests, too, were close, my friend's neighbour being an accountant and his new friend down South an assistant professor of economics at a small college. After some months, they seemed to be well and truly in love, and my friend's neighbour was convinced that 'this was it', as he put it. When some vacation time came up, he arranged to fly down south for a few days and meet his Internet love.

During the day of travel, he called his friend two or three times and they talked. Then he was surprised to receive no answer. Nor was his friend at the airport to meet him. After waiting there and calling several more times, my friend's neighbour left the airport and went to the address his friend had given him. No one answered when he knocked and rang. Every possibility went through his mind.

Here, some parts of the story are missing, but my friend told me that what her neighbour learned was that, on that very day, even as he was on his way south, his Internet friend had died of a heart attack while on the phone with his doctor; my friend's neighbour, having learned this either from the man's neighbour or from the police, had made his way to the local morgue; he had been allowed to view his Internet friend; and so it was here, face to face with a dead man, that he first laid eyes on the one who, he had been convinced, was to have been his companion for life.



NOTES DURING LONG PHONE CONVERSATION WITH MOTHER

for summer – she needs

pretty dress – cotton

cotton nottoc

coontt

tcoont

toonct

toctnot tocont

tocton

contot



ON THE TRAIN

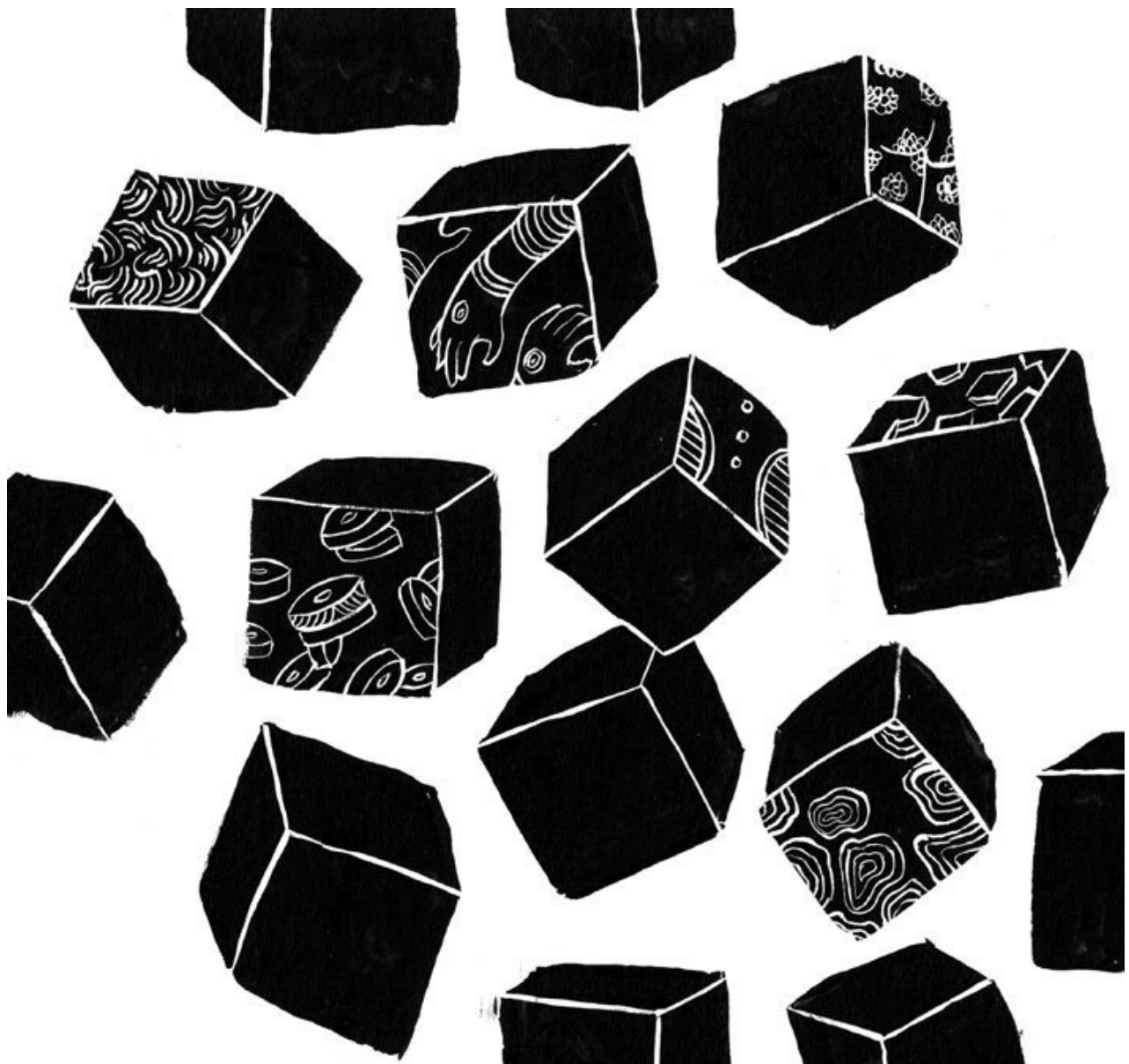
We are united, he and I, though strangers, against the two women in front of us talking so steadily and audibly across the aisle to each other. Bad manners.

Later in the journey I look over at him (across the aisle) and he is picking his nose. As for me, I am dripping tomato from my sandwich on to my newspaper. Bad habits.

I would not report this if I were the one picking my nose.

I look again and he is still at it.

As for the women, they are now sitting together side by side and quietly reading, clean and tidy, one a magazine, one a book. Blameless.



SUSIE BROWN WILL BE IN TOWN

Susie Brown will be in town. She will be in town to sell her things. Susie Brown is moving far away. She would like to sell her queen mattress. Do we want her queen mattress? Do we want her ottoman? Do we want her bath items?

It is time to say goodbye to Susie Brown. We have enjoyed her friendship.

We have enjoyed her tennis lessons.

SUBSCRIBE TO FIVE DIALS. IT'S FREE.

By clicking SUBSCRIBE, I consent to you using my details to send me Five Dials newsletters and confirm that I have read and understood Penguin Random

House's [Privacy Policy](#)

(<https://www.penguinrandomhouse.co.uk/PrivacyPolicy/>).

LYDIA DAVIS ([HTTPS://FIVEDIALS.COM/AUTHOR/LYDIA-DAVIS/](https://fivedials.com/author/lydia-davis/))

Lydia Davis is the author of *The End of the Story* and multiple collections of short fiction, including *Varieties of Disturbance* and *Can't and Won't*. She is the recipient of a Guggenheim Fellowship and a MacArthur Fellowship, and was named a Chevalier of the Order of Arts and Letters by the French government for her fiction and her translations of modern writers, including Gustave Flaubert and Marcel Proust. She was a finalist for the 2007 National Book Award and won the Man Booker International Prize in 2013. Her new collection of literary essays will be published in Spring 2019.

 (<https://www.penguin.co.uk/authors/lydia-davis/23449/>)

RELATED POSTS