

Katrina Millan, 2021

The Trap

Geraldine lived in the walls for eight days before we caught her.

He named her after my mother because she irritated the hell out of him. He laughed, and I pretended to.

He would rail and holler when her scurrying interrupted his cold silences. I smiled secretly in adjacent rooms, and left bits of bread near vents and under cracks in baseboards.

At night, I talked to her, reciting silent prayers to the rat in the wall: *Dear Geraldine, do you like life in this house? Dear Geraldine, if you could leave, would you?*

I begged for a humane trap. He scoffed.

“You’ve got no sense. Are you going to keep her as a pet? Or roast her on a spit and eat her? We’ll have to kill her. If something outside doesn’t gobble her up, she’ll be back in the walls.”

No, I thought, *she won’t*.

When caught, she threw her small body against the trap walls in squealing desperation.

“See?” he sighed, “Now there’s going to be a mess.” His hunting knife glinted brutally in his hand.

“I’ll do it” I pleaded.

He shook his head.

After the fight, I took Geraldine to the woods. She had quieted, acclimating to life within the trap, when I set it down.

“There is more than one way to be devoured,” I warned, and lifted the release. I wanted to stay out in the cold air, but there was blood on my knife and a mess waiting for me at home.