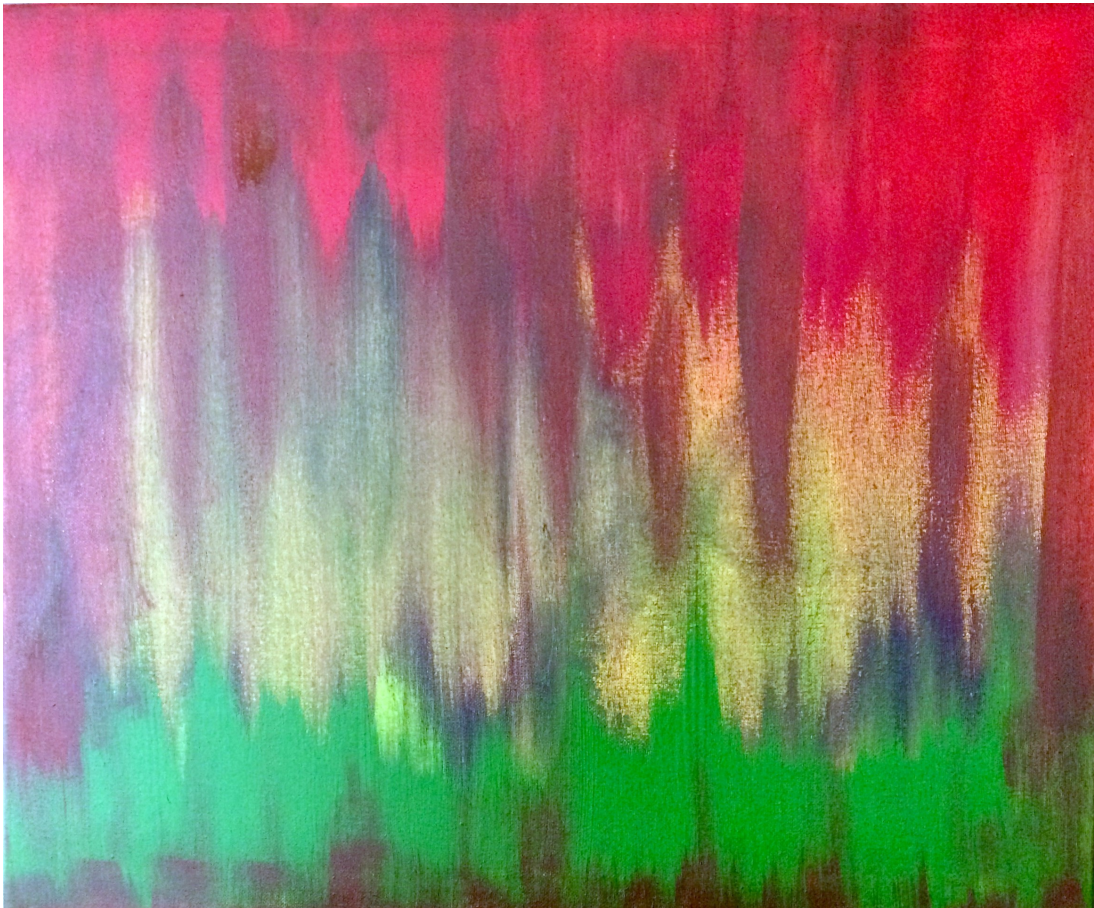


FLASH FICTION

Modern Kitchen

by Catia Dawood



"Australia" by Kimberly Williams

Most accidents happen in the home, most notably in the kitchen.

She watches him slice the tomatoes with precision, the translucent juice filling the ridges of the wood chopping board. Their scent of freshness and summer melts with garlic, a hint of basil, a dash of olive oil: a daydream of blinding sun reflecting against white stone and a sapphire blue sky.

She envies Elmo as much as she feels sorry for him. His touch is as insensitive as hers is dormant, the delicate softness of the plum tomato out of reach to both.

He catches her watching. She holds his electric gaze as she puts one foot ahead of the other, provocatively. “Please keep your distance,” he issues a programmed warning. She walks slowly, purposefully, towards him. His eyes have as many depths of sadness as hers. He shifts on his feet, alarmed. “For your protection — please stay away,” a metallic shriek.

She is closer to him now than she has ever been. The hairs on her arm stand up at the touch of his cool iron skin.

She remembers the heat in Tuscany, the olive grove. Cooling her feet on the kitchen tiles. The wooden countertop, the gravy on the stove, tomatoes from her back garden. A shiver as the blade brushed her skin while she chopped.

She closes her eyes and traces her fingers down to his knife-hand, onto the ripe red fruit. She presses her long fingernails into it. The skin bursts, tearing, folding onto itself, exposing the softness of the flesh. Pulp spills out as she pierces deeper, seeds lodging beneath her nails, warm liquid sprinkling onto her wrist, onto his fingers, dripping.

Metal slices with precision, crimson lines on wood. Elmo is silent now. He carries on chopping.