

RICHARD SIKEN

Heat Map

The neurologist takes out a folder, a picture. He points at my brain with a finger, says *here*. It looks like a map of a city on fire, a snapshot of weather. It creeps me out. He keeps saying *damage*. He is speaking slowly and being very clear. In my bag, at my feet, are two little notebooks. I could point to the sections that show the same thing. The breach, the rupture, the picture of it—there are things we shouldn't have to see. Why would anyone want to see the inside of anything? I think about my brain. The metaphor of it. I think about my heart. The metaphor of it. I think about looking at the earth from space. No monkey was ever supposed to see that. Nauseating. I ruined myself with bad living. He isn't saying it but he's saying it. The microscope, the telescope, the magnetic resonance imaging machine. We pry open the black box. It's nauseating. My heart is beating, my heart is always beating. I can't stand the feel of it. It rattles me. My arm is heavy. My leg is numb. I can feel my breathing. If I can't live in my body or in my head then where does that leave me? He is talking and I am nodding. I'm waiting for him to tell me that it isn't going to happen again. He isn't saying it. I stop listening.

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