

**Ellen Meloy**

## **I Stapled My Hair to the Roof**

I have just stapled my hair to the roof. I was unfurling heavy rolls of black felt over the pitched roof. Then I would lean in and staple the felt in place with tin caps. This requires grunt labor more than skill. But I was daydreaming about snowy egrets and leaned too far.

I'm my own boss. I'm in no particular rush. The day is so clear you could bite it. It seems a good time to enjoy the view and contemplate the dazzling spectacle of women awakening to their own full powers. With a slight twist I lie on my back.

Now, I will give you my precise location and concentric geography. The roof covers a modest owner-built home on eight acres of desert. Our house, me affixed to its south flank, faces a sheer escarpment of rose and beige sandstone. Below the cliff flows the San Juan River. Several miles southwest of my feet lies Monument Valley on the Navajo reservation. It's the home of the Mirage People, so called because it doesn't rain there often. House, river, the rez, Colorado Plateau, Utah, America, the world, the universe.

Stapled to the roof, I have serious thoughts about human potential. My Navajo neighbors have lived for centuries in a matrilineal society. In pioneer times, while the men mumbled about posses and punched each other's lights out, the grandmothers of my Anglo neighbors simply got off their horses and took care of business. Rural women could always raise roofs and corn, kids and hell. Yet today, one speaks of women marching into equality as if that were a different country. "No," I think as two turkey vultures circle above me, "we're simply occupying the rest of what has always been home." House, town, country, the world, the universe.

The turkey vultures don't see this geography of possibility. They see me, an edible, two-legged smudge on a plywood platter. I extricate my hair and return to felt and staple gun. Before I finish, two parties pass by on the highway. They pull over and watch, then offer me jobs. But I only have one roof in me, my own, and what I'd really like to do next is to run a tractor or a government. Perhaps a particle accelerator.

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