

MINNIE BRUCE PRATT

Turning the Switch Off

Habit—the key in the ignition, and no, maybe never, thought about why what happens next. Turn down Gertrude, into Almond, sun into shadow under the overpass, then the sun gnawing at my ear at the red light. The comfort of habit, not psychological. The pileated cackle every June in the old magnolia, rejoicing the chambered seed cone has opened, the plump lick. What habit gives us, and when it fails. Tushabe says there were two seasons, wet and dry, the farmers knew time out of time when to plant until now, the drought, the weather has changed its habit. Or something else has changed the mind of the climate. We were watching *Norma Rae* yesterday, holding hands, the mill hands reached out and turned each switch off. How hard to break the habit of work, obedience not to the machines, but to those who own them. The hand reaching out to take its own, bringing the fragment, the red seed, delicious to the mouth.