

Rage, Virginia

Brittany Micka-Foos

Lorrie spent the best years of her life employed by RAGE Synthetics: the 200,000 square foot manufacturing and sales plant that languished on a bend in the Roanoke River, unceasingly pumping its plastic byproducts back into those murky waters.

She started as a sales girl, back when a generous smile and sensible skirt passed as sales prowess. Over two decades, she'd worked her way up to department supervisor. Lorrie was good at her job; she genuinely liked people. Then mom got sick. Lung cancer. Mom never smoked a day in her life. Bad luck, the oncologist said. We'll do what we can.

Months passed. Lorrie became a salamander sloughing off skin, from careerwoman to caretaker. Her supervisor didn't appreciate it: the days off, the ever-darkening circles under her eyes. Lorrie watched her boss's initial sympathy shift to annoyance, then indignation. Eventually, unceremoniously, he fired her.

Lorrie watched the smoke tower belch black exhaust into the open air. She packed her belongings into a cardboard box.

All those bottles, all that polymer. All those years stacked up and knocked down. Just like that. She was an expiration date, a ticking time bomb. Expendable. But once she had been the girl knee-deep in a stream, the girl who caught mudpuppies in a mason jar, who brimmed with unrestrained delight.

Rage, Virginia. Out of all the small towns, out of all the places on earth. Ire. Wrath. Fury. No, she couldn't think of a better word. Rage. Rage was perfect.

