



**2013 SRP Pushcart Nominee 003**  
**Joanna Hoffman, from *Running for Trap Doors*:**

**“High School Electives”**

Shop class is for boys and lesbians. Not starfish like you that sit faceless and unscreaming as they slice your limbs. *It's okay*, you say, *I can grow more*. You love the smell of thirsty metal, of a grind that drowns you in the belly of its noise, the snowdrift of splinters and how a steady hand can birth something new. You think they can't see you under the mask and smock, the bulky gloves. You are still the girl with torn cuticles and the face of someone used to eating lunch in the bathroom.

Home Ec is in the brightest room. The oven timers are *tsking* at how slowly your breasts punctuate the run-on sentence you've become. Your roast is all wrong. The blood washes over the gummy flesh and you wonder if you are the last girl in your class who hasn't yet had her period. Maybe you really are a boy. Who would marry you with your knobby knees, with your sour cupcakes and bland soup? No wonder you grew up with a taste for boiled eggs and sardines from the can. No wonder your recipe book is full of Chinese take-out menus.

Creative Writing is the last class of the day. Afterwards, half the kids stay to work on the literary magazine. All of the submissions are anonymous. When yours fills the screen, you bite the inside of your cheek. *Let's talk about the narrator*, Ms. Nowak says. More than anything, you want to think of her reading your poems. *Look how the writer speaks about their desire for a woman. What does that tell you?* Someone yells out, *it's written by a guy*. Ms. Nowak nods. Yvonne, who hates everything, says, *I like him. I vote yes*.