

Spiderland

DS Higdon

Inception Finalist

We spent nights in the basement. We shared our space with thin-legged spiders and humpback crickets, minor things that scurried and hugged shadows. Earth wept through the foundation, damp cinderblocks stained with specks of dirt, like blackheads on a shy boy's face. We spent nights under mason jars ranked on plywood shelves, opaque with kraut, pickles, peppers, pole beans, and crushed tomatoes. Behind a bedsheet curtain, Issacs's dad grew pot in five-gallon buckets under fluorescent lights. We strung Christmas lights from the joists and scavenged a stack of 45s from a moldy cardboard box. *One Toke Over the Line Sweet Jesus*. *Cover of the Rolling Stone*. We flipped through creased *Hustlers* and *Swamp Thing* comics. The coils of a space heater glowed and hummed in a corner, and we smoked Newports I stole from Mom's purse. We exhaled our dreams from the window well into the cold dark sky, only our faces and the constellations reflected in the casement pane.