

that would wait till tomorrow. At the moment, I had higher priorities.

I went upstairs to our bedroom, relieved to find Allison asleep. I didn't want a third degree about where I'd gone and what I'd bought. She was lying flat on her back, the only way she was able to sleep comfortably at this stage of her pregnancy. Her stomach was clearly visible in the moonlight, looking like a satellite moon rising from the down blanket.

I slipped into bed beside her, our new remote cradled in my hand. I placed my free hand on her stomach. Other than the normal rhythm of her breathing, I couldn't detect any movement. There were no fetal tremors, no kicking or squirming. That worried me since the baby had been so active from the early months of pregnancy.

I pressed the Backlight button so I could read the LCD, then switched the remote into the prenatal mode. I placed it against Allison's stomach, where I judged the baby's head would be, and pressed the Power button. Immediately, I felt the baby stir, arms and legs moving beneath Allison's flesh.

I was tempted to test more functions, but I didn't want to risk waking Allison. I powered off the remote and the baby was quiet again. I could feel peace settling over the whole house, like a soft and seductive blanket. I'd never spent so much on a remote before, but it was worth whatever it cost to be sure we'd have a healthy, efficiently functioning child. It was also a great comfort to know that, after I mailed off the rebate form, I'd recover part of the cost.

Writer **John Blades** is a former book editor/critic at the *Chicago Tribune* and author of the 1992 novel *Small Game* (Holt). He has also written for the *Washington Post*, *Publishers Weekly*, the *Morning News*, and numerous other publications.

JEFF DION

Coal Rig, 2016
Oil on canvas, 48 x 63 in



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