

JASON E. CARTER

Domestic #15, 2013
Oil on canvas, 32 x 37.25 in



COURTESY PAUL KOTULA PROJECTS

JANICE DEAL

This One Is Okay

After Grant died, Looie had some time on her hands.

All those months Grant was getting sicker and sicker, and Looie never told anyone, but she used to sometimes think that it would be a relief when he was gone. He'd always had such a generous spirit, but in the end he got mean. Cancer did that to a person. Didn't it?

But now he's gone and there's just the raised ranch they moved into as newlyweds. The grass outside is long and rank, with bald patches, but when she gets back from the store, or last week the post office, she feels a comfort. She likes her yellow kitchen, the way light moves across the linoleum tiles on the floor. It happens in an instant; it takes all day. Sometimes the house, and her life in it, don't seem of the world.

"My life, it's *extramundane*," she says to her best friend, Hannah-Grace, on the phone, and Hannah-Grace snorts. When Grant was very ill, Looie started looking up a new word every day. It cheered her to pull the old dictionary from the shelf; the book had been a gift from her parents when she turned twelve. They had been so gracious that way: receiving a dictionary, a good pen, decent luggage had all been rites of passage for Looie. She and Grant had tried at first to continue this tradition with their own son, Brett, but somewhere along the way it seems they'd gotten tired.

Then Brett went away to college and Looie found, at an estate sale, a microprint edition of the Oxford English Dictionary. What a thing it was! Every page of the twenty-volume set was shrunk down to the size of a playing card.

"Can you imagine?" Looie had called Grant from the gravel backyard of the estate. It wasn't really an estate; it was a split-level with vinyl siding. But the book, organized so that each page held nine of the tiny playing-card pages, was cunning and beautiful.

"We don't need any more crap," Grant said. But he sounded resigned; it was as though he already knew.

Looie went back to the owner of the house, or at least the woman who was managing the sale. She wore red bell-bottoms, like she didn't care, and she had brass balls, that one; Looie had seen a young couple try to bargain her down on a square ottoman upholstered in stained nubuck. Quite a little crowd gathered around them as they bickered back and forth, but in the end, the couple slunk away.

"I can't read this," Looie informed the woman. She had laid the dictionary down with a reverent thud, having