Summer 1994

The Next General

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Recommended Citation

Pittendrigh, Nadya (1994) "The Next General," *CutBank*: Vol. 1 : Iss. 42 , Article 8.
Available at: https://scholarworks.umt.edu/cutbank/vol1/iss42/8

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The Next General

This part of me sews with stiff shoulders on the ice
   barge.
I just want it done.
The captain labors next door trading light fish for
   heavy ones
in darkness. We aren't pressed for time
and can't stay away from each other on deck;
we hit the iceberg. At bathing time we strip
with the light snuffed; I can smell them lifting
   weights.

The hands gather to toss a couple of crates out on the
   surface;
But the ice won't crack. The box, says the captain,
looks like a settlement out there. Then burn it! And
   the surface melts.

Downtown, smoke jumpers arrive on awnings, others
   pack the alleys.
They're all invited in through various back doors,
   eventually.
My brother is gone
and I've been running the tenant houses;
I may have the deed somewhere in my clothes.

Here comes the village doctor.
At least fifty green bottles
hang on strings around the porch; I tell her it's like a
   sombrero.
The muffin tin she offers is only part of her
   collection.

I apologize because my hands are black from
    gardening. I tell her,
I was born on Ziante Road, but my parents were
    renting the house.
Six months after the birth my parents finally named
    me Ziante.

The rest crowd in. "Am I the mayor?"
I tell them my job is inscribing information in the
    upper left corner of post cards.
I ask them, "How can I help you?"