

# **A BORROWED CHILDHOOD MEMORY, NEW YORK CITY, 1923**

**MARK JAY  
BREWIN, JR.**

*—for Dan Elkin*

Stoop banisters and fence chains, fire escapes  
and car fenders all held the June heat like a fireplace  
poker left in the coals. Watery heat-fumes  
rising from the fresh-tarred parking lot.  
Fescue sprouting through cracks in the curb,  
the feathery tips drooping and bobbing  
in the humid gusts lagging down the street.

For a nickel apiece, we packed hatboxes  
full of praying mantises—pencil-holes  
punched in the lid, wilting grass blades—watched  
their rocking crawl, one over top of the other.  
Spiked forelegs hooked on rotting cords of beef fat  
baited on sewing thread we drug along the bottom:  
their hunger saved for whatever looks alive.