

"Here they are, or what's left of 'em. Sure sorry you broke your glasses, mister." And through the glaze of sweat, his myopic eyes saw in his outstretched hand some hazy broken black pieces and shreds of glass. While he stood, peering intently at his sweaty palm, the crowd of boys like a horde of noisy insects moved on down the street, and the rumped, tousled little man stood alone in front of the exquisite blue bowl.

ON HOARDING THINGS

Elizabeth Tindall

I hoard things—like the little plastic bear I won at the fair, and the card that came with the first flowers I ever received, and even the old, tired Easter hat that I made from a paper plate and scraps of ribbon. There is also a drawer in my room jammed full of broken-clasped necklaces, rejected buttons, puzzling chunks of wood, an empty jar of something, and a lint remover that collects things on its own time. But besides these tangible lovelies, I hoard thoughts. Thoughts of people and things, places and events that have no physical evidences of ever being. Like pieces of broken bottle and shredded bits of paper, they litter my mind. And I remember my childhood with kaleidoscopic images from assorted angles in trees, atop roofs, and on the ground.

There was the frantic look on my mothers face the time our house caught on fire. And one Thanksgiving Day Sis broke her arm, and everyone rushed about in confusion until we got her to the hospital. I still remember my gloating vengeance when I greeted my brother at the door and said, "Our report cards came, and you flunked history, and I got all "A's," and Dad wants to see you." All the pets we had, and all the times people threatened to sue us because some dumb kid put his leg in our dog's mouth. Silly little flashbacks of times, times pleasant as if they had all come in the middle of June . . . and yet, I'm sure they did not. I guess that is the advantage of intelligent and discriminative hoarding: I can discard all the unpleasanties so that my past reads as I want it to. Sort of like a window, cleansed of all the dirt that ever touched it.

So now I ask myself, "Why do I hoard things?—things that have no possible use or meaning for anyone but me?" I think part of it is that I am too lazy to clean out my drawers, but also I want to hold on to what I was and what I did. Faintly reminiscent of Proust's "thé et petite madeleine," I can relive all the sensations of a certain time, or place, or person just by seeing a mauled ticket stub or program. Typically, I have dozens of pictures of myself without glasses, though I have worn glasses since I was nine. So my past is a little distorted. I saved only the good parts and tried to forget the rest. But it is great when I feel like somebody's instrument of torture, because all I have to do is walk in my room and things rush out at me, and I know somebody remembers and cares about me—me! It is also reassuring to know that if I ever need a '56 Buick hubcap or 1 3/8 yards of char-treuse, velvet ribbon, I will have it.

Applause

Antonio Criscimagna

Above the many cancelled faces
a man.

A trapdoor appearance.

Through the stillness
the sound of bone
being broken.

No more a man
than a ham
with limbs tied
and head bowed

no more a face.

A black hood.