

1989

# The House that I live in

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*San Jose State University*

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Twyman, Jerydth J., M.A.

San Jose State University, 1989

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**THE HOUSE THAT I LIVE IN**

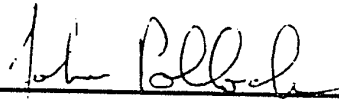
**A Project Report  
Presented to  
the Faculty of the Department of English  
San Jose State University**

**In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Master of Arts**

**By  
Jerydth J. Twyman**

**May 1989**

APPROVED FOR THE DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH



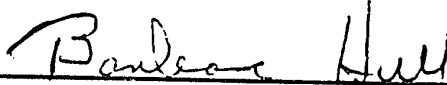
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## ABSTRACT

### THE HOUSE THAT I LIVE IN

by Jerydth J. Tywman

This is a Creative Writing Project consisting of a collection of poems, prose pieces, and short stories that represent a serious look at the inner self. Self-exploration, self-discovery, and finally self-awareness are achieved through the art of writing. The theme of loneliness and creative aloneness are explored through the various pieces in this project, and the reader is taken on this journey of the soul in the same manner in which one might explore a house. There are the "attic pieces" in Part One, the "basement pieces" in Part Two, and in Part Three the main living quarters of the house are explored in hopes of bringing the quest to some sort of resolution. The quest for self-knowledge through art is not a new one, but each writer, in his or her own unique way, has a wonderful avenue with which to explore the inner being through poetry, prose, or short stories, and while the audience can appreciate the art, they can also perhaps gain some insight into their own soul.

## Dedication

This work is dedicated to my sister,  
Teryl Hakanson-Kerr  
who has encouraged me for most of the years of my life  
to write.

## Acknowledgements

This project has been in a "stop" and "go" pattern now for five years. There are many people who have pushed the "go" button, and a few people who have pushed it more than once.

At San Jose State University, Naomi Clark, Nils Peterson, and Gabriel Rico taught me, all over again, how to write seriously. Fellow graduate students Cousette Copeland, Maureen Sladen, Lisa Gunn, Dale Bryant, and Judith Mohr offered continual professional and personal encouragement and many new insights into my work.

I would like to thank Carolyn Forché, who during the 1976-77 academic year at San Diego State University, instilled in me an incredible desire to write poetry.

My parents, Harold and Jean Hakanson, my sister Teryl, and my brother Carl, all deserve credit for being the outstanding people that they are and for being an integral part of who I have become. To my dearest friend, Jill Sibley Jenkins, I owe my sanity and perseverance; she has truly kept me going for these past two years.

I would like to thank my husband, Clive, for his patience and his emotional support, and to Ashley and Dylan I give my overwhelming love and devotion for enriching my life and my work beyond belief.

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## Introduction

A friend recently asked why I was "doing" a masters program. It doesn't seem to be something of great significance in terms of the world, nor does it seem feasible for someone like me, a mother of two. The question that always follows the "Why are you doing this" question is "What do you plan to do with it?" Well, I had to stop and think about this, and I realized that the one thing I have always been sure of is the need and desire to become a better writer, which is difficult to explain to most people. I do not spend a great deal of time thinking about why I write because it is just something I do, something I feel I have to do, and something that I have always done. Gene Olson writes, "Cave dwellers who drew simple figures on the stone walls of their shelters were among the first to demonstrate a primitive truth: one of the most basic urges driving human beings is the urge to communicate" (6). After writing for years, you eventually realize that you must do this seriously, and so you find yourself in graduate writing seminars. This is when you begin to really work at the craft. "Poets, many of whom have trouble getting their work published, often solve the problem by reading their poetry to each other. Somehow the process is not complete until the connection is made with another human mind. Writing words and hiding them in a desk drawer doesn't make the all-important connection" (Olsen 7). I write hoping that I will indeed make that all-important connection, not only with other human minds, but with my own. The quest for self-knowledge through art is not a new one, but each writer, in his or her own unique way, has a wonderful avenue with which to explore the self through poetry, prose, or short stories, and while the audience can appreciate the art, they can also perhaps gain some insight into their own soul.

The House That I Live In is a collection of poems, prose pieces, and short stories that represent a serious look at my own inner being in an attempt to define the person that I have become in the world today. Self-scrutiny, self-exploration, self-discovery, and finally self-awareness are achieved through the art of writing. To accomplish this, I have had to isolate myself for blocks of time from the day-to-day life around me. Looking inward is a solitary task. In his book The Pursuit of Loneliness, Philip Slater says: "We seek more and more privacy, and feel more and more alienated and lonely when we get it" (7). Most of us can identify with the paradoxical truth that the one sure thing we share with our fellow human beings is loneliness. Loneliness is usually associated with a negative sense of being. I have discovered that, not only is it a necessary element for artistic creativity, but that loneliness and solitude can become positive elements in the search for the self. It is true that "for at bottom, and just in the deepest and most important things, we are unutterably alone, and for one person to be able to advise or even help another, a lot must happen, a lot must go well, a whole constellation of things must come right in order to once succeed" (Rilke 24). Feeling lonely can indicate creative aloneness and awareness, and though this solitude can be difficult, it is also necessary. "The necessary thing is after all but this: solitude, great inner solitude. Going into oneself and for hours meeting no one -- this one must be able to attain" (Rilke 46). Going into oneself is like exploring a house, the same house that holds within its walls the sum total of our being, the house of the soul. In my house, there are many rooms, and in each room there are closets, drawers, windows, shelves, boxes, and all sorts of containers that hold the images and experiences that have, in part, created the person that I am. Alone, and at

times very much afraid, I went from room to room and began opening up these containers, one by one, and attempted to take an honest look at what is essentially my own soul. The pieces in this project are only a small part of what I discovered in this house, and represent the experiences that seemed to express common human conditions and emotions.

I have given a chronological order to these pieces, even though they were not necessarily written in the order that they appear, because it seemed to me a most natural way to look at a life. The place where the images of my childhood are stored is the attic, and the attic pieces make up Part One. I have always felt that childhood memories provide more truth and insight into life and the inner self than anything else in this world, and that, in writing, they are the best resources for creative pieces. One must consider, however, that memory changes as the adult emerges and so it is difficult to sift through the adult vision when attempting to find that pure child vision. In the Kansas pieces in Part One, I have attempted to capture early childhood images to provide a means through which one can once again experience "thoughts that do often lie too deep for tears" (Wordsworth 181). There are two poems of William Wordsworth, Tintern Abbey and Ode: Intimations of Immortality, that I have always felt best explained and defined the importance of childhood memories and child vision, and it is true that:

Those shadowy recollections,  
Which, be they what they may,  
Are yet the fountain of all our day,  
Are yet a master of light of all our seeing . . . .

(Wordsworth 180). The Kansas pieces are the images of childhood, images based on fact but transformed into fiction by the adult point of view. I am hoping that these pieces contain enough of that pure child vision, however, to provide a true experience for the audience.

Part Two is the section of this project I have the most difficulty discussing and/or explaining, and the place in my house where these images are stored is the basement. The basement represents the areas of the mind that are darker, more secretive, and more elusive than the clear and quiet images from the attic. From one piece to the next there seems, at times, to be no connection except for an underlying feeling of anxiety, isolation, and abandonment. The chronological time period is early adulthood, that time when the self is in the process of definition and yet not quite able to attain it. The world is a confusing place as portrayed in Part Two and not many things make sense or feel secure there. The introductory poem "Premonition" points to a feeling of unresolved anxiousness and the pieces that follow in this section continue in this same tone. The writing style is somewhat different from that in Part One. Where solid images and a sense of place create a certain amount of simple stability in Part One, Part Two tends, through the use of a colder and more distant voice, to create a feeling of complex confusion. One piece, "Habits," has an almost surrealistic tone to it, and all of the pieces involve more psychological leaping than the other sections. Robert Bly says in his book Leaping Poetry: An Idea with Poems and Translations, that "thought of in terms of language, then, leaping is the ability to associate fast. In a great ancient or modern poem, the considerable distance between the associations, the distance the spark has to



leap, gives the lines their bottomless feeling, their space, and the speed of the association increases the excitement of the poetry" (4).

The long piece in Part Two, "Eyes in the Hallway," is probably the best example of confusion that I am trying to portray here. There is a fine line between sanity and insanity, and most of us go through a time in our lives when we wonder which side of the line we are on. The intent here is to portray a feeling of being stuck in a world that seems endless and lonely. The characters in these pieces watch the world around them but rarely participate in it; they move in circles and are struggling to find their way up and out of themselves. What they cannot see is that their progression forward in life does not depend on the world around them, but entirely on themselves. They remain in the basement because they have no self-awareness. They lack the confidence to walk up the stairs into the main living quarters of the house. I turn to Part Three to explore the possibilities of resolution and acceptance.

In Part Three we leave the attic and the basement and move on to the main part of the house. This is the part of the house that is actually lived in on a day-to-day basis, and it is appropriate that the women in these pieces be described in terms of their homes, because their homes make up a large portion of their world and how they see themselves in that world. The emptiness and loneliness of Part Two emerges into confrontation and acceptance in Part Three. The two characters who are most important in this section are Julia and Anna (from "Julia" and "Anna's Fears"). Julia's questioning of the self and then coming to terms with her "house" is a precedent for the courage and strength that Anna discovers within herself. The movement is toward self-definition and enough self-awareness to, in the end, learn to accept the idea of being alone.

"Anna's Fears" appears last in this project because Anna represents the culmination of all the pieces and characters that precede her. Anna knows her house well; she understands herself, and becomes strong enough to move on in her life. In this story, Anna sells her house and everything in it and heads off looking for new beginnings. She knows how to be alone. She knows how to use this solitude to push her ahead and keep her going. Anna is on the brink of becoming a whole human being, and all of the pieces that lead up to this shed light on the process that made this kind of self-awareness possible. I have learned from all these characters. Anna has taught me much about solitude. Solitude is creative energy. Whether the pieces be poems, or prose, or a short story, they were born from a state of solitude, which is necessary for a careful look at the house we live in, the house that we call the soul. Rainer Maria Rilke realized the importance of solitude in the creative process when he said, ". . . . and one learns slowly to recognize the very few things in which the eternal endures that one can love and something solitary in which one can quietly take part" (Rilke 43).

I have been working on this project for three years now and didn't know, until the past few months, what would emerge as the overall theme. This was a matter of discovery after the fact. When looked upon as a whole project, it becomes very clear to me that each individual piece in this project successfully carries its own weight, but when read as a whole, the individual pieces pick up new levels of meaning. The soul, or the inner being, is the one place in which we are truly alone. No one lives there with us. The House That I Live In, if nothing else, has been a successful search for an understanding of my own soul, and I no longer fear this place that I, alone, inhabit. Eventually, as in

Anna's case ("Anna's Fears"), the artistic intent is to bring the outer and inner life into unison, but for now I believe in "the wish that you may find patience enough in yourself to endure, and simplicity enough to believe; that you may acquire more and more confidence in that which is difficult, and in your solitude among others. And for the rest, let life happen to you. Believe me: life is right, in any case" (Rilke 74).

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*"That from which these things are born*

*That by which they live*

*That to which they return at death*

*Try to know that"*

From "Burning the Tomato Worms" by Carolyn Forché

## Part One

## This Land

Does your land still hold you?  
You were smart, Grandpa,  
when you bought during the Depression.  
You did not put your money in banks.  
You chased the government man  
with a shotgun; he wanted  
to take your pigs.

Grandma sold the old house, you know,  
she moved to Wichita.  
She does not talk about you,  
but about the man before;  
she is way back in time, Grandpa.

Your son, my father, still  
has wheat in his hands,  
tries to wash it out  
here in the Pacific.  
He says he does not like Kansas.

Those were long years, Grandpa  
When dust had to be shook out  
everyday and everyday the sheets  
washed. You stayed in Kansas.  
You would be proud of your son,  
or is the dust still in you?

## A Place Gone and a Life about to Happen

In Kansas, when it rains, we hide in the cellar, silent. We wait for tornado sirens to stop. When it is hot, the days drip slow over my arms. My legs itch, covered with chigger bites. Mom keeps checking our scalps for ticks. My skin turns to leather during Kansas summers, and there are only two kinds of weather -- hot-damp, and so wild that farmers fear for their crops. There is nothing in between but slowness.

### The Town

Many towns here have the names of women. Not far away is a town called Sharon, another called Helena. They are all the same. Main street is the only paved road in town, and it is paved with bricks. Isabel has a post-office, a cafe, a bank. Maxine is the only woman in this town that does hair, her beauty shop is in her kitchen. There are two baseball diamonds next to a small park. There are not many streets, maybe three or four, and on every corner is a church, a Protestant church. Some towns in this state are Catholic and some are Protestant. Then there are the Dunkards and the Mennonites, who rarely come to town, and whose children do not attend the local schools. The High School is off Main Street. The grain elevator marks the center of town. The rest is farm land. There is one highway, about a mile or two from town, that leads east to Medicine Lodge, or west to Pratt.

These faces are the voice of this town. Darwine, Velma, Maxine, Sheila Jo, Sherry Jean, Leota, Thelma, Everette, Carlton, Vernon, Harold, Neal, and Gail Lee.



### Harvest

Grandpa needs Dad to help. The weather is playing tricks on harvest, and fallen heads of wheat cannot be replaced. I go out to the fields. The heads fall, one row then another, and still another row. The sun burns over Medicine Lodge, hovers over Grandpa's fields in Isabel. My father takes a break in the shade of a combine and is cooled off by the sweat that drenches him. He stops and drinks from the river, river water in green muck. I do not know, and I do not ask, why the jug of iced-tea is left untouched. I fall asleep to field-by-field rhythm, a long, hot sleep with no dreams, only dust. The combine never loses time. I wake up in the dark, which cannot hide the crusty feel of dust on my face, my elbows, behind my knees, under my toes. I look down and one foot is bare and dirty. I lost my shoe somewhere by the twentieth acre. Not night yet, the storm is a black horizon.

In the morning, cattle line up against the fence, tightly packed, with noses poking at the barbed wire. The black horizon shifts and spreads toward farm-shaped dots with chimneys. Uncle Carl looks in every direction, licks a fingertip, holds it in the air, rubs his unshaved chin, says nothing. Uncle Carl chains the barn shut, nails the gate that leads into the pasture. He has done this many times before. He knows it will get worse. The wind comes now in blasts, and through the kitchen window I see him fight his way back to the house.

In the house we gather blankets, grab pillows, make continuous trips up and down from the main floor to the cellar. The cellar is musty and cold and quiet, except for the sound of the generator. I read comic books and watch my sister pick at the brownish, hairy stuffing from a hole in the dirty couch. Dad smokes cigarette after cigarette. Uncle Carl rubs his chin, peeks through the

cellar window, as if he can see past the brown weeds in the garden. The tornado sirens scream on and off all day and into the evening. Mom runs upstairs, comes back down with a red plastic transistor radio. There is too much static to hear anything. I read over the same comic books and my sister falls asleep with her feet tucked underneath my bottom. The static in the radio pauses in spurts, a deep, gravelly voice comes through. At first we do not get whole sentences, but we wait, we listen anyway, all eyes on the red transistor. The voice gets clearer, says a tornado has hit Pratt, calmly announces four deaths, says the storm is over. We go back upstairs and try to sleep.

### Grain Elevators

Cousin Sheila and I have the same middle name, our fathers are brothers. They do not look much like each other and neither do Sheila and I. Sheila and I spend our summers together like loose change, not big enough to do much. She has dark brown hair, dark opalescent eyes like fire agates. My eyes are barely green. We have the same nose and the same baby-like fingers. She lives her life here on this farm, has no desire to go anywhere else. I do not understand this, but I do not know how to tell her.

Sheila takes me to the very top of Isabel's grain elevator. I look out and can see the curve of the earth. There are no hills, no high-rise buildings, no mountains to stop the eye. I see miles of wheat, grain elevators, cattle, corn, and four towns not big enough for names. Sheila says, "I can see the whole world from here." I look at her, look back out to the horizon, and ask "Where?"

### Grandmother's House

Grandmother's house has many rooms, and is so full of voices that it

would take years of opening windows to let them out. Grandmother's house is always crowded with relatives during the summer, relatives from other towns just like Isabel. The harvest crew hangs around the barn waiting for our baskets of fried chicken, corn on the cob, potato salad, fresh tomatoes, and a jug of iced-tea. Sheila and I watch the men eat as we swing on the porch swing at the south side of the house. This house is so big that in the slowness of summer heat, it takes a half an hour to walk around it.

My sister and I sleep upstairs in the room facing the West. We hate this room and my sister is convinced that it is haunted. We have made a pact, that if one of us falls asleep, the other will wake her up. This never works, we always fall asleep at the same time. We hate this room because Grandmother has taken all the closet doors off. Inside the closet is a long, clear plastic bag with two American flags inside of it. The flags are draped over hangers and look neatly pressed. The white stripes have turned yellow. All summer my sister asks Dad what this means, but he never answers her. He just stares down at her blankly with the same kind of eyes that she has, the same kind of eyes that Sheila has.

During the day, when my sister and I are in this room, we look through the dresser drawers. This dresser is old and small and has six drawers with bone-carved handles. In one of the drawers is a set of teeth. We dare each other to touch them, but never can bring ourselves to do it. They are Grandpa's. He was buried without them. Grandmother will not throw them out or move them to another dresser, they mean everything to her now. The other drawers are filled with tin-types, old perfume bottles, and dust. I have the same nightmare over and over in this room.

*I have a twin sister. She is exactly like me, except her eyes are solid green. I love her so much, but she does not want to go back to California when the summer is over, and I have to make a choice. After thinking about this for a long time, I run away to the loft in the barn and cry. Then grandfather is with me in the hayloft, but his teeth are gone. When he talks I cannot hear him, but I know that he wants me to jump out of the loft window. He says it will not hurt and I believe him. I go to the window, look out and see the grain elevators across town. Grandpa is right and so I leap into the air.*

### Grandmother

Grandmother takes naps, covers her face with newspapers that flutter up and down with her snoring. Her breasts, shapeless as pillows, fill her rose colored blouse from her collar bone to her waist. She wears the only apron I have ever seen her in, deep blue with faded roses. Her hands rest on her stomach clumped like garden carrots, clearly lined and still holding in their crevices dust, and dough, and crumbling remnants of wheat. She looks peaceful when she sleeps, and this is when I love her. When she is awake, she does not like children, and when she is mad, she shakes her finger in my face, then shakes a Bible in the air. I do not want anything from her except to hold her hand. This never happens. When Grandmother is awake she is as dry as the dust that penetrates every crack in her house. She spends her life chasing dust, sweeps it away every morning.

### Wheat

Sheila and I have gone out many times with Uncle Carl to the fields. We

ride on the combine, watch the wheat pour into the bin. When the bin is full a truck comes, and through a chute attached to the bin, the wheat is dumped into the truck. Sometimes a dead snake rolls down the chute, or a blue tennis shoe, or pieces of an old water jug. Sheila and I grab a handful of raw wheat and shove it in our mouths. We don't talk. Silent, we chew and grind, making gum, then we spit at targets of bushes and willow trees. We do this most of the hot afternoon, acres roll by underneath us. The combine never loses time.

Sometimes we talk about our fathers, and tell stories we have heard.

Sometimes we prop ourselves against the outside of the bin and close our eyes. Sometimes we sleep.

*Grandpa has come to see me, but he cannot talk to me. He is holding a photograph. It is a picture of himself as a child in Sweden. He is gesturing to me. He wants to go home, but he cannot leave this place. I search for the things I have overheard about him.*

The sun curves around the horizon, deep orange and blues melt together, and the combine heads back to the house. Sound is tied up in the swishing of wind against uncut heads of wheat. There are not many acres left to cut. Tomorrow harvest will be over.

### Invocation

Sunday morning we go to church, all of us. We do not really listen. Uncle Carl looks out of the window, and I wonder what he sees through the stained glass. Sheila nudges me and whispers, "Today we will celebrate." I feel pinned on all sides by voices. The church pew is hard. Once, clear words come from the minister. I hold one hand in the air, reach out to catch them. . . .

.. *Ashes to ashes, dust to dust* . . . . . It is the only thing I hear, the only thing I believe.

## The Winter Sun

I see the white sun climb into the landscape through the mist from my breath. It spreads out like memories framed in a blue, cold morning. The flat land holds the snow well, rising only around homes, barns, and trees. It is not the world it was, the world of waving wheat fields, and harvest coming, but the silent world of slow-moving winter. This is the world of interiors. I learn to discover walls, to search for the beauty of interiors, but even this is not the whole truth.

### Day One

We arrive after three days of driving, stopping only one night in Albuquerque. I put on my shoes before climbing out of the car. The snow is deep and cold. Mother rushes us onto the porch, knocks hard at the door, waits for an answer. I look around and see that Grandma's house is so different now, the windows covered with storm shutters, the porch swing barely recognizable, only the chains that hook it to the roof of the porch are visible, the rest covered with snow. It is quiet in the snow, the only sound is the crunch of Dad's shoes as he lifts his suitcases out of the back of the car and carries them, two at a time, onto the porch. Mother is tired and edgy, face tight against the cold, voice brittle. She knocks again, harder. I stand behind her holding my arms tight against my chest. When Grandma comes to the door, there is a flurry and rush inside, hugs and kisses, questions about the trip. I run to the fireplace to thaw out my toes, look around and notice that nothing has changed since the summer, but the house feels different. The tree, untrimmed, is in the corner of the family room, big and bushy. The china cabinet is empty. The ruby glass that Grandma collects is stacked on the dining room table. I try to imagine what food

will look like on those red dishes. My brother and sister are plopped on the couch like two rag dolls, watching me warm my toes. Dad finishes carrying in the bags, takes off his boots, then his coat, and lights a cigarette. Grandma rushes Mother toward the kitchen where there is fresh coffee and warm pastries. Mother gives my father a desperate glance but obediently follows Grandma's endless apron into the other room. This day begins and ends with food and naps. It goes by fast, and I am glad when it is time to go upstairs and unpack. My sister and I, as usual, will sleep together in the room facing the West, the room we are afraid of. We should be tired, but cannot sleep, so we sneak down the hall to the stairs, sit on the bottom step and listen to the voices coming from the family room. There are the deep rumbling voices of men, and then there are the clear sounding voices of women, mostly my Grandma's voice, no laughter. The words are not clear or exact and the sound is somehow comforting and I fall asleep on the stairs.

### Day Two

Uncle Richard and Lizzie arrive early. Breakfast is on the table when I come downstairs. Grandma is bustling about the kitchen, talking nonstop at Mother. Mother turns and smiles in my direction while she peels potatoes, watches me sit down at the table, looks across the room at Dad, looks back at me. There is something strange about the way she does this. When she is not looking I watch her and it is the first time I notice that she is pretty and somehow I know that she doesn't belong here. Lizzie grabs a chair next to me and we give each other our secret wink. She says that we are going sledding today. I look out the window at the flat land all around us but do not say a word.



After breakfast Lizzie and I hop into Uncle Richard's truck, in the back is a small wooden sled. When we get to Lizzie's house, about three miles away, she unloads the sled by herself, eyeing the snow drift piled up against the barn. We add snow to the drift, digging out little steps to climb it, then we spend hours sliding down. Lizzie yells that she will go down one last time. I know that I am too tired to care, my eyes and lips burn from the cold, but I cheer her on. She laughs and talks her way up the drift, onto the sled, and down the hill, but when she hits the bottom the sled pops up in front of her and I see her and the sled tumble into the fence next to the barn. I scream and Uncle Richard comes running from the barn. By the time I reach her, she is on her feet holding her mouth, blood dripping onto the snow. Uncle Richard swoops her up into his arms, puts her into the truck. I follow unnoticed.

The doctor comes out of the room, wiping his brow. He smiles at me and tells me that she will be all right. Uncle Richard comes out next, then Lizzie. Her tongue is swollen and red and she cannot close or open her mouth all of the way. She can't talk and I can tell that she has been crying. The doctor put nine stitches in her tongue. "I suppose that'll keep her kind of quiet for a few days," is all Uncle Richard says as he puts his arm around her and walks her out to the truck. I feel sick, I can't imagine Lizzie not being able to talk, and she has a school play coming up.

At dinner, I sit next to Lizzie while she sips milk through a straw. The dinner table is very quiet this night and I take my time looking around the table. I study the faces. Many of the faces look alike, but my mother's face is very different. No one looks like her, except me, and this makes me sad. After

dinner, I convince Uncle Richard to let Lizzie stay the night with me, and I hug her real tight before we drift off to sleep next to my sister.

### Day Three

It is the day of Christmas Eve and the rest of the family starts to arrive, Aunt Lydia and Uncle Pat from Wichita, Aunt Pauline and Dwayne, cousin Jeannie, Winnie Joe, Brenda, Carl Eric, Annie Jean, and more that I don't know. Most of the morning is spent stepping carefully between conversations to go into the kitchen to get more ice for Lizzie and anything cold that will move through a straw. She tries to talk today but her tongue is still too swollen. There is lots of food, piled everywhere, as dinner rolls into supper, and supper rolls into an evening of desserts and hot cider, and decorating the tree. The tree is beautiful, but the only piece that interests me is the angel perched on the very top. Lizzie and I stay up late and stare at that white-haired angel. Lizzie falls asleep under the tree and I am alone with the angel. Then I feel Mother's soft robe brush against my leg. She puts her finger to her mouth, takes my hand, and walks me upstairs to my room.

### Day Four

Christmas morning is a panicked flight down the stairs, whirling through the sitting room to the packages underneath the tree. I look up at the angel and say a quick prayer for a doll. Soon everyone is awake and around the tree, but we cannot open our presents. Grandma insists that the presents be opened one at a time. The sound of bells echoes outside the front door, and Santa Claus steps into the room. I do not give him much thought because this happens every Christmas. He hands out the packages, one by one, and we rip into them throwing paper and ribbons into the air. This year Santa brings me a

silky night gown, knit gloves, some record albums, a diary, and a heart-shaped necklace. No doll. I look around the room for Mother and Dad but can't find them. Santa takes up his bag to leave the room and I see my father's familiar, skinny, hairy calf hanging down below the Santa suit. I had known for a long time that one of the men, usually Uncle Richard, dressed up as Santa every year, but seeing my dad do this upsets me. Lizzie recognizes him too and begins to laugh. Lizzie gets her tongue back and I become silent. Christmas dinner drifts by in the endless conversations of the adults. Their laughter bothers me, even Lizzie bothers me now. After Lizzie leaves to go home, I sneak away and sit at the bottom of the stairs and think about this place. I think about my grandma and realize for the first time that I don't love her, that she hardly knows me.

#### Day Five

We have to leave before noon to make it home on schedule. Mother looks happy for the first time since we have arrived. Dad spends the morning over coffee and conversation with Grandma and Uncle Richard. My brother sits and pretends to listen to them talk. Mother disappears upstairs, comes back down toting our suitcases. Dad ignores her and talks even more slowly to Uncle Richard. I put on my boots, my gloves, my coat and hat, and slip out the front door onto the porch. I have not been outside since the sledding accident, and it feels good to breathe the cold, thick air. I make a half-hearted attempt at clearing the porch swing, then walk around it, down the steps, out to the driveway, and lean against the car. The land, flat and white, sparkles underneath the morning sun. There is no sound, except for my breath passing in and out. I close my eyes for a moment then look again at the flatness around

me and wish I could see Lizzie just one more time. I look up at Grandma's house. I know it is warm inside, but I wait for them to come out. We pull away from the farm and I watch it through the rear window for a long time. The land looks the same for miles and finally there is nothing new to see. I fall asleep thinking, thinking about Lizzie's tongue and Grandma's red dishes, and how beautiful my mother is. The winter sun burns a different light, travels a shorter path, ends the day too soon.

## Sundog

Kate kneels in the warm, damp ground and stares into the wheat field beyond where the barn once stood. Beyond the wheat a dark, tall figure moves toward her. She studies his movements. She knows this walk, this man. He moves closer, steady and slow and even, a silent combine in the morning light cutting a path through tall grain. She raises her hand in a half-wave and thinks to herself that he is like the earth, and she remembers the time she chose to leave and he chose to stay on this land.

Side-by-side they stand, these two, talking softly so as not to disturb the ghosts that live here. While he talks she studies his face and finds nothing in it of remembering. She remembers his hands, his young hands, wrapped around her in the barn that once stood, in that warm, warm hay, under a humid and sticky sky. She remembers that kind of smiling and laughing in slow motion while the earth stands still and the wheat grows and the land keeps on doing what it has always done. She says nothing but she wants to know where his remembering has gone.

The sky is half-dark on this afternoon. He is silent and looking south. He points to where the sun forces light through the clouds, through little holes of blue at the edge of the darkness. "A sundog," he says. She knows about predictions and sundogs and weather that will change with the same kind of sameness as always.

From her car, Kate waves a half-wave toward the figure that walks away. He moves steadily past the barn that once stood, past the wheat, and out of sight. She pulls out slowly on the dirt road and heads south. She follows the sundog into the darkness.

## Chains

We live  
one tornado to the next  
in a house of many rooms  
in a house so full  
it takes years  
of removing storm shutters  
of opening windows  
to let out the voices.

Somewhere, in those voices  
is my birth  
and every birth that came before  
and every birth that came after,  
a chain of prayers  
chanting a rescue  
that never arrives.

We live  
one harvest to the next  
blaming each other  
yelling out of open windows,  
a chain I cannot break  
and voices  
that I must listen to.

I listen to voices  
and know  
that there is no difference  
between you and me,  
that it all comes down  
through the blood,  
from your mouth  
to my mouth  
in the winds that sweep  
before a tornado.

*You were smart, Grandpa, when you bought during the depression. You did not put your money in banks. You chased the government man with a shotgun because he wanted to take your pigs. Your son still has wheat in his hands, tries to wash it out in the Pacific. He says he will never live on this farm again. When the dust had to be shook and swept everyday, and everyday the sheets washed. You stayed in Kansas.*



## Part Two

## Premonition

And who is going to listen  
to my soul  
when it gives  
out, gives up, has nothing  
left to give?  
I hear you, fix you  
up, heal you.  
It is survival, watching  
small pieces slip  
into a dark heart, steal away  
into someone else's hands.  
There is nothing to do now  
but watch, breathe slower,  
pace it down to  
a steady thump  
and wait.

## Habits

The woman from the third floor sits on the edge of my bed with her blue satin bag. She turns to me and spills the contents onto the pillow next to me. I turn over and lie very still, keep my eyes closed as long as possible. When I look, all I can see are chips of blue glass layed out like sapphires across my sheets. No, that is not right, the glass is really porcelain, porcelain pieces with tiny mauve and yellow flowers painted on them, and leaves and stems broken off at the edge of each piece. Each piece is evenly cut. I try to imagine the tools that did this, but there is nothing I know that could cut a vase up like this.

There is a chance, one more shot, to put the pieces back together. Every night she works, but when she gets to the very last piece, there is always one missing. All she has to do is touch the ragged edge where the gap is, and the pieces fall in slow motion, silently, into a small cream colored pile. She stares for a moment, no emotion, then lights another candle, tenderly gathers up the slices of porcelain, slides them into the blue satin bag, moves to her front door so quietly, slips into her black heels, walks down the stairs into the street.

Sonnet 1

It Takes a Long Time to Die

In the hours before darkness I talk  
to myself, and feel you come haunting  
like black mist, thick fog, a ghostwalk.  
I breathe in, then out, a dark longing.  
You know when to reach for me, at night,  
when I cannot see you, when the trees  
are just black against black, no light.  
When the only thing that really sees  
is the mind. And you feel the right time  
to come home; weaving inside, you slide  
right through me like a cold, fine  
voice. I want to know how long, how wide  
you will unfold in me, how deep this distress?  
"A long time," you say, and I am your witness.

## Eyes in the Hallway

Leigh is insane and I can't help her. I have nothing more to give her, nothing more to say. I want her to go away, not exist anymore, but her image is always there, looking back at me, an unavoidable reflection in the mirror. I close my eyes and say to myself, "You cannot lie when your eyes are closed," over and over until her image fades away. I keep hoping that the phone calls will stop, the letters will stop, that her friends and family will stop expecting me to help her. I know nothing.

### Leigh

I remember Leigh as tall and strong, moving smoothly through each day with the seeming effortlessness of a boat that glides in and out of the harbor. She controlled her life carefully, always able to rearrange priorities quickly to suit her needs. She was successful, for the most part, and had a way of drawing people in, making them like her whether they wanted to or not. We were a lot alike. About the only difference between us was her calendar. She scheduled her life in a little brown leather folder, some kind of business calendar. I can never keep track of things, even when I do write them down, so I had a hard time understanding her devotion to this calendar. One time she thought she had lost it and I thought she would never recover. It had slipped underneath a cushion of her sofa, and once recovered, Leigh stopped shaking.

Leigh and I even had the same clothes in our closets. When I first saw her closet I couldn't believe it, just like mine only she hangs her clothes on smooth plastic hangers instead of wire hangers. Sometimes we'd accidentally show up to meet each other in the same outfit. This would upset Leigh a great

deal, but we would end up laughing about it. Leigh used to laugh a lot, she is always laughing when I picture her before. Anyway, I don't know how these things start, why they happen, I only know that Leigh's story begins with sleeplessness and bad dreams.

### Sleeping

Leigh doesn't sleep anymore. She says it is the fog that keeps her awake, it moves around and around her house making so much noise that it is impossible to sleep. She turns on all of the lights in the house, and everything electrical, the t.v., the radio, the vacuum cleaner, and lets them run all night long. This keeps the fog from disturbing her. She tries to read, but reading scares her. There are secret messages written in her books, messages placed there specifically for her. She tries to watch television, but nothing makes sense anymore, she says "they" are sending messages through the television, so she just leaves it on and purposely ignores it. Leigh thinks she is being very clever by doing this.

Leigh also decides not to sit down at night, so she moves through the house constantly, peering into each room, turning the lights off and then back on again. She carries an old shower curtain rod and her little brother's pellet gun, just to make sure that everything is safe. The only times she sits down is when she is on the telephone, and she makes her calls after midnight. She has a feeling that the phones are bugged during the day, but that it is safe to talk at night, and even then, she only whispers into the phone. Leigh calls each member of her family every night, then her friends, one by one, saying that she is fine, feeling better tonight. Then she is calling only me. Every night she calls

and says the same thing. "Is it you, is it really you?" For some reason Leigh always thinks that I am dead, or that I have disappeared, and she is sure that she saw my car all crumpled up in the ditch around the corner from her house. Her mother's car has been in this ditch several times now. She is always relieved when I tell her that my car is in my garage, safe and sound, and that I am fine.

Leigh stopped driving her car because she went to get in it the other day and there was a twisted metal coat hanger lying in the gutter next to it. She is sure that this is a bad sign. I try to tell her that nothing is wrong with her car, I even have my boyfriend look it over for her. This makes no difference, and she stands at the bottom of her steps shaking her head and looking at my boyfriend suspiciously. I give up and start driving her places myself. Each week there is something new that Leigh stops doing. Her parents can't take it anymore and refuse to accept her calls. I can't take it anymore, but there is no one else.

### The Hospitals

I used to call this floor the "psycho ward". In this hospital the fourth floor of a seven story building is reserved for patients with drug problems or psychological disorders. The doctors come onto the floor twice a day, have a chat with each patient, observe them in the sitting room, prescribe drugs for each one, write this all down on their aluminum charts, and then, after two weeks, make a final evaluation and recommendation. This is the third time I have brought Leigh here. Each time it is the same thing. Leigh is diagnosed as Paranoid Schizophrenic and told that she must stay on drugs and get long-term, serious psychotherapy. Each time she refuses, "I just need to get some rest. If I

could just get a good night's sleep I'll be o.k." The doctors give her drugs to help her sleep, but the drugs make her sick to her stomach, and cause her legs to twitch and jump when she is resting or asleep. Usually, I visit her twice a day for two weeks, and then I take her home.

This time the doctors want to keep her another week and have changed the rules just for her. I sit by her bed while she sleeps. I try to read but am distracted by her jerking legs bouncing up through the stiff white sheets. I take little walks now and then down the hall to keep myself awake. The other patients shuffle about like ghosts and I avoid looking into their eyes. I have tried looking at them but their eyes are dead and stare through me into the nothingness of this place. It is all I can do to look at Leigh. When I return to her room, she is standing in front of the mirror. Her eyes are glassy, but I convince myself that her eyes do not look like the eyes in the hallway.

"I look like shit!" she says and opens the top drawer of a white dresser, grabs a hairbrush, and furiously starts brushing her hair. "Do you have any make-up with you?" she asks without looking at me, and I reach into my purse to get it. She starts to put on some mascara and looks at me in the mirror. "How long this time?" I don't want to tell her, but she has to know the truth. "Three weeks this time, Leigh," I keep my voice level, try not to reveal anything. She says nothing, and turns her head away from my reflection.

I sit with her in the doctor's office waiting for the final evaluation. I know it will be the same, but Leigh believes that she is all right now, and that this will not happen again. The doctor comes in with a pile of brochures and a clipboard. I know what he is going to say, I have memorized this speech and seen the brochures many times. I explain to the doctor that Leigh's parents



have offered to pay for the therapy, that I have offered to pay for the therapy, but it is useless, Leigh will not go. She gathers up her bags and I take her home. This time I do not stay with her, I am tired. When I get home I throw myself onto the bed and try to sleep. Nothing happens, so I take a hot shower, clean my house, every inch, pack my bags, and leave for two weeks. I do not tell Leigh that I am going, and I do not leave a phone number or a message on my answering machine.

### Signs

When I get back I feel better but I am worried so I drive by Leigh's place on my way home from work. She doesn't answer the door, but I know that she is there. I yell through the door several times and hear the locks open, one by one. In the living room the drapes are pulled shut and it is dark. The house smells like it has been closed up for years. Everything is strangely clean. Leigh looks terrible and won't talk to me. Her hair is combed up in a tight bun, there is no make-up on her face, and I can see the familiar dark circles and the pale, pale drawn skin on her face and neck. She is wearing the same pair of jeans that I brought her home in and a T-shirt that is too small, no shoes, no socks. She looks thin, so I walk into the kitchen and check the refrigerator. There is nothing in it. I walk into her bedroom and notice that her bed is stripped of blankets and sheets, and the top mattress is on the floor next to the bed. There are wet towels on top of the floor heater vents. Leigh had told me once that she thought she was being gassed through the floor vents. For the first time, I am really scared. Leigh stands beside me in the doorway and starts to cry. With my arms around her shaking shoulders, we walk into the living room and sit on the

couch. Her hands are shaking and they look almost blue. We sit for a long time saying nothing.

"What happened this time? You said you were o.k. this time. What set this in motion?" Something specific always triggered these episodes, but there were usually at least three or four months, sometimes six, between them. I know I can't help her, that she scares me, that I have to get away from her, and I feel guilty.

"It's the signs," she says in a choked whisper, "I keep getting these signs. They are everywhere, just like Satan! I haven't left the house but I have opened my curtains to look outside." She stops talking, her body shakes, her eyes are big and glassy. "I looked out the window and there it was! That picture of Jesus, as big as a car, just sitting there on top of that house up the street! I know it is there for me." She is in a panic now, her eyes darting from one corner of the room to another. I walk over to the window, pull the drapes open and looked up the street. There is a two-story house, lime green with white trim, and on the ledge of the second story is a painting obviously left there to dry. It is a very large painting, rather odd to see up on that ledge, but nothing that unusual. I can't tell, but it looks like the head of an animal. In one quick motion I jerk Leigh over to the window, grab her chin and turn it toward the window and hold her there, hard. When she finally looks, I see the horror in her face. She turns away quickly and hides her face in the curtains.

"See! I told you!" She sobs and then wipes her nose on the back of her hand.

"Leigh, look again, its not Jesus! Its just the head of a lion, it's an animal for God's sake!" I keep yelling at her to look again but she doesn't believe me

and I know she never will. I throw her back down onto the couch and yell, "Just sit there and don't move." In her bedroom I find her suitcase next to her bed, all packed and ready to go. I walk back out to the living room, stand in the doorway, and take a deep breath. I look at her for a very long time but do not feel sorry for her, I do not feel anything. I grab her hand, shove her into the front seat of my car, go back to lock up her house, and drive to the hospital.

At the hospital Leigh is quiet, stares into the nothingness of her own reflection in the mirror, eyes blank, telling nothing, seeing nothing. She sits on the edge of her bed, moves her hands up and down in a worshipping fashion. She does not know that I am in the room, or that she is back in the hospital. I watch her for a long time wondering about things, why they happen, what causes them. Another ghost shuffles by the doorway, distracts me, and I step into the hall to watch it go by. This time, when the next ghost comes by, I look him straight in the eyes. He looks through me. Does he see the same things Leigh sees? Before I leave, I go back into Leigh's room, hug her hard, kiss her cheek. I can't tell if anyone is really there inside of that face. There is no response. This is the last time I come here, the last time I see Leigh. As I walk out into the sunlight, I stop and draw a long breath, close my eyes, wish hard for an understanding. This will never happen. I say to myself, "You cannot lie when your eyes are closed," and walk away.

Sonnet 2  
And Ashes

I find a solid, heart-shaped earring,  
just one, tucked way back, behind  
the knits and polyesters, behind things  
that you never wore, like kind  
photographs of Nana, and ribbons from your  
birthday gifts. I hold it in my hand,  
feel the metal soften, turn, pour  
out. Here, in your privacy, I stand  
like a stranger, or thief, snatching your past,  
searching for it, needing it to keep  
myself counted among the living, not cast  
into doubt, not dwelling on endless sleep.  
I look into the palm of my hand, see the heart, small  
and cold. This I will keep, this is all.

Part Three

### Sonnet 3

#### History

With the flick of the switch you turn  
on the light and ask why I'm sitting  
alone, in the dark. The words burn  
to come out, but I can't tell you a thing  
that might give it away because you  
would want more than I know  
I could explain, and I don't expect two  
of us to carry this kind of thinking around so  
I say nothing. You say the past doesn't mean  
a thing to you, but I am sure what has gone  
before matters, all of it, and I have seen  
the places of my past spread out like white sky on  
the paper. I no longer fear what was once the unknown,  
because these things I face, in the dark, alone.

## Julia

Julia lives with this reoccurring image of blue. It has not always been this way, but now, in her dreams, she sees only the color blue, and behind the images, like one shadow lying on top of another, are a pair of blue eyes that she cannot forget. These eyes are always open and they follow her from her bed to her car to her job, back to her home, then slip into her pillow and wait for her dreams to begin. Julia lives alone in a house filled with voices. She listens to them when she has the time. This started not too long ago, long enough, when she looked up from her journal one day and, while looking at no particular thing, eyes unfocused, a face walked through her mind on the other side of a glass window. She cannot forget the face, the name, what his eyes have done to her. Julia has green eyes that fade in and out of color when the weather changes. She does not think that her eyes are significant in any way, she does not look at them often. She would like to have the kind of eyes that touch people, that send messages from a distance, like the blue eyes behind the shadow that invade her dreams at night. When Julia thinks about this man she drives herself crazy, sits down at her desk, leans her chin into the palm of her hand, stares out the window, unfocuses, writes. Thoughtless stuff, but she can't help it. She believes that words live and die by their own merit. "What's done is done." This writing, this dream, this blue shadow hovering, echoes a deeper pain, a scream from the inside-out. Moving into it is dangerous, and being careful not to laugh too much has to count for something.

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Julia takes time every day to work in her garden. She often wonders what she is going to do with all of her left-over feelings. They creep up behind her all of the time when she is doing the laundry, or washing the dishes, or taking a shower, but especially when she is in the garden. Julia holds endless conversations with herself, working the words in and out of the weeds, talking to a man with blue eyes, talking to the roses about something that never happened. Each conversation is more difficult than the first, losing the words in suppressed anger, or hanging them in the olive trees to ripen. It always comes back to the same thing -- what is most difficult to do is always the right thing to do. Julia repeats this to herself over and over while she bends down to pick the clover that is choking her flowers. She looks up from the ground and is annoyed to see the long, straight fracture running down the length of the bird bath. Since the spring she has tried a number of methods to repair it, and everyday she tries something new, putty, tape, string. Nothing works. "If I could just get these weeds out of the garden..." Julia's voice trails off, falls and drops to the grass in front of the bird bath. It is the only voice she has heard all day.

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Sitting by an open window, Julia talks to herself in the length of a sunset. She tells herself that it has nothing to do with the fact that his eyes are blue, or that the small lines around them are filled with a concern, a past she is familiar with. *"I don't even know you. It has more to do with fear, sometimes even terror, because if I look at you for very long, the only face I can see is my own. What happens in the silent conversations, conversations that begin and end in a glance, is something I can't explain."* Julia tells her roses about this, but she never writes it down. She says that dangerous things do not belong on paper,



because paper makes them permanent and unreal. So when she sees him, she turns away, looks down at her feet, or lets the wind blow her hair across her face. She thinks, at these moments, that everything is dangerous, especially touching, laughing even more so. He moves around her like fog and she will hide her eyes and stand perfectly still.

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Julia wakes up in the morning and goes to the mirror. Everything is the same -- the long hair, the long face, the clear eyes. She is surprised that nothing in her face reveals her dream. She climbs into the shower, sits under the water and talks to herself. *"It is a terrible thing when you're sure you've missed your calling, and even worse when you can't remember what that calling was."* These thoughts follow her into the kitchen. *"What is it that I was going to do, that I still need to do?"* She remembers when this thing burned inside of her. In the morning sun Julia searches her garden for the answer, but even this place has lost its meaning. She searches through the rooms of her home, hoping to find a note, or something that will lead her back to this thing, but the house is empty and she is alone. Even the dream does not help her now. Walking quickly to the front door, Julia places her hand on the brass handle, cautiously opens the door, steps out onto the front porch, and is afraid that she will never find out what it is that she really needs to do. Standing there, in her robe, hair damp still in places, she looks across the street and waves to a neighbor whose name she does not know and smiles. The sun is warm on her back, but in the distance she can see black clouds gathering. Walking back inside she thinks about her life. *"I will try again tomorrow, tomorrow I will find out."*

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Julia feels the time of fall coming quickly and she is anxious that this time will come and go without her. She picks the last roses from her garden and places them in a tall blue vase. This blue vase reminds her of the man with blue eyes. She will never see him again. She places the flowers on one corner of the desk in the library and sits down in the big green leather chair. It has been a long time since Julia has done any serious writing, and she misses those days when the words came fast, one on top of the other, and the joy that it brought her. She looks through the glass in the library doors, out to the hallway, and wonders what it is that keeps her here. She thinks that maybe she has no choice, that she really does belong here, that maybe this is exactly what she is supposed to be doing. She places her fingers on the keys of the typewriter not knowing what will happen, but praying that something will happen. Julia writes:

*I have been listening for a long time now,  
but the words that come down to me are not clear so  
I sit by an open window and pray to the wind.  
It is a day of clouds and wind and being alone  
in a house that I know well. A house filled with stories,  
stories sitting, waiting in each room of this house. Rooms  
decorated just as you like. Books crucially in order in  
the library, plants placed just so in the kitchen and  
that clock standing in the entry exactly where it should be.  
Even the copper pitcher in the dining room knows how to stand  
slightly tilted so that you can see the curved lines  
of the spout and the curved lines of the handle*

*at the same time. Everything is in order, has its order,  
and I wait for an answer. Trust yourself.*

*This is the house that I live in forever  
and ever, Amen.*

## Anna's Fears

He had given up a good portion of his still young life, traveled very far, spent quite a large amount of someone else's money to get to her. In the beginning it was an honest adventure, a true search for knowledge, a quest to "learn the craft" from the best. Now, after many years she had become an ugly obsession--he hated her in oh so many ways, but could not, somehow, imagine his life without her. There was nothing he could do about it, and being in her house again made him feel nervous and hot. He could not understand how she came to choose this place to do her work, but then there was very little about her everyday life that made sense to him. He could hear her voice trailing in from the garden and quickly wiped his brow with a napkin he had pulled from a tea tray that had been left in the hallway.

"Fraaaaank! It is you! I have been waiting so long to see you again, and I hope that you will stay longer this time, in fact, I insist upon it. I am, at this very moment, having the room on the third floor prepared for you. It's bigger than your usual room, has better ventilation, and will be very private. Now don't say a word, because I won't listen to you anyway. You must stay, and I promise, there will be no fighting, no harsh words, no throwing of tea cups, or any nonsense of that sort this time. Really, we must put that all behind us and concentrate on our work. Yes, our work! Our work is the most important thing in the world, wouldn't you agree? Anyway, I have been working on some new pieces that you must look at....."

Frank watched her lips move in their usual sideways manner and thought to himself that if she just tried a little, maybe a little makeup or a new style for her

hair, that she would be an attractive woman, perhaps even pretty. He had never thought of her as beautiful. Anna always represented something much bigger than beauty. The way Frank saw it, she really was the most powerful human being he had ever known, and there was no denying that Anna had taught him well. He knew that he could never repay her for the knowledge and help that she had imparted to him, and he had come to accept the fact that she would, in one way or another, get everything back that was coming to her. It was like borrowing money from a relative, he thought to himself, you could pay back the loan, but they never let you forget that you borrowed it in the first place.

"Yes, Anna, we must concentrate on our work, but must we do it right now? I have been traveling for at least the last thirteen hours, and I am hot and tired. My stomach is in knots. Do you mind if I take a shower and get some sleep first? I am sure that our work can wait." Anna's head had snapped in Frank's direction and her green eyes stared him into the corner.

"Of course, Frank, whatever you wish." She turned and left the room. Frank was surprised, relieved, then worried. Anna had never let him off the hook that easily before.

Three flights of stairs, with luggage, in what seemed like endless heat, made him think that this whole trip was really quite insane, and that he ought to go right back down and leave this place. But here he was, two flights up, sweating profusely, and no way out for at least a week. He knew that there were no cabs to call here, very few busses, and the train station he had last seen was at least a hundred miles away, or so it seemed to him at the moment. As he struggled upward, Frank tried to remember exactly what country he was in this time, but it didn't matter. It never mattered which of Anna's homes you

picked to visit because they were always located in the same hot, remote and sweaty type of country. Frank never knew, nor did he want to know, which jungle Anna would pick next, but he always managed to find her. Finding her always became necessary and then he usually regretted it.

Frank's room on the third floor was really not so bad. He sat down on the bed and looked around. She had prepared the room well. There was a large desk in one corner below two windows, no curtains. Frank liked that. He laughed to himself and said, "God knows that human beings are rare in these parts." A large stack of typing paper and a fairly new typewriter were the only items on the desk. Sitting in the window sill was a blue glass vase filled with some sort of jungle flora that Anna must have recently put there. Frank wondered how Anna knew that he would be there in time to enjoy them. The flowers were beautiful, peach and pink and white, and Frank stared at them in a half-daze for a long time. He thought that Anna had picked those flowers out just for him, which made him suspicious, because Anna had a purpose for all that she did, and this purpose was usually connected somehow to a long range plan or scheme. Frank fell asleep thinking about those flowers, and the heat, and the long, long trip to here, wherever he was.

Down in the kitchen Anna was preparing tea and biscuits for two. Father Ravi sat in the kitchen nook looking out the windows and rubbing his chin thoughtfully. He was a small man, mole-like, and very dark even in comparison to his fellow countrymen, and his only annoying habit was the habit of continually rubbing his chin, but Anna liked his company and so they had tea and biscuits every Tuesday morning. From the first time she had met him at the orphanage she had liked him, so she went there quite often to read to the

children and bring them treats. Father Ravi had always taken the time to talk with her and was ever so grateful for her help with the children. Sometimes Anna felt that he was the only one on earth who could possibly understand her; he had an understanding soul, and she knew there were few people in the world like that. They both shared an interest in literature and poetry and loved to have long, philosophical discussion about life and love and God and things of that nature. Anna looked over the counter at him and smiled.

"It really is a beautiful morning, isn't it Father Ravi?"

"Yes, it really is, and you know, somehow today the morning seems brighter than usual. I have been sitting here thinking that I should do something special today with the children. Perhaps a picnic. Would you like to join us, Anna?"

"I would Father, but I've got a house guest, an old friend from home, and he and I have so much to do and a lot to catch up on. I'm afraid I'm going to be quite busy for a few days. I will still come to see the children as usual, and of course we will have our morning tea, but I have plans to work very hard while my friend is here."

"I'm so glad to see you this interested in your work again. Your friend must be an artist, of course? Is your friend also planning to work very hard?" Father Ravi smiled in his knowing way. He was all too familiar with Anna and her "plans", and he had tried very hard to encourage Anna to relax and slow down, but he never could, and it amazed him that she could maintain her quickness in this slow, hot country. Anna rarely stopped moving.

"My friend will also be working very hard", Anna glanced toward the stairs nervously. "If he ever wakes up that is," she said as she began pacing

back and forth in front of the stove. Father Ravi continued to look out the window and waited for Anna to pour herself another cup of tea. Once done she carefully carried her teacup over to the table, picked a spot across the table from Father Ravi and sat down. Father Ravi turned to her in surprise.

"You are going to sit and have your tea?" Tuesday mornings were usually spent here in the kitchen nook, but Anna never sat down to have her tea. She spent most of the conversation walking back and forth from the sink to the stove to the table to the windows.

"You see, Father Ravi, I can hold still if I put my mind to it." Father Ravi laughed and began giving Anna the latest news from the orphanage: who was still there, who had gone away, which child was having trouble, which children were doing well. As he talked Anna pretended to listen but she found it very difficult to concentrate on what he was saying. Sitting for tea made her nervous, but do it she would. Becoming predictable was a fear of hers and she was damn well going to prove different. She found herself staring down the hall to the stairs, straining to hear footsteps, and all the while pretending to listen attentively to every word that Father Ravi said, but Father Ravi knew better and so politely gave her the out that she needed.

"Anna, I must be going now, I just remembered that we have a new priest arriving today and I must be there to greet him."

"Oh Father Ravi, must you go so soon? We haven't even discussed the auction yet, and I know you need a commitment soon."

"Well, Anna, it will just have to wait, I suppose, but don't worry. If I hear any news, I will let you know right away." Father Ravi rose from his chair in his usual slow manner, and carried his tea cup back over to the sink. As he did,



Anna heard footsteps on the stairs and jumped up from her seat. As he approached the door, he turned to say good-bye, and noticed that her face had gone pale. He didn't say a word, but quietly let himself out the garden door and padded away. On his walk back to the orphanage he couldn't stop thinking about Anna and her guest. A feeling of uncertainty found its way into his heart, and a fear that something was about to happen to Anna made him think that the day was not so beautiful after all.

Anna, barely aware that Father Ravi had left, dashed to the cupboard and pulled out a fresh tea cup. She placed it next to the stove. Then she removed the plate of biscuits from the table and added some more, filling the plate again, and setting it next to the stove. As she moved back and forth in the kitchen she noticed that a lock of her hair had fallen out of the clip, and in a second she snapped the clip open, pulled all of her hair up tight, and snapped the clip closed again snug against the back of her head. She took a quick look around to make sure that everything was in proper order and went to the drawer next to the pantry and opened it quickly. She pulled out all of the papers that were there, a huge pile, some old and some new. As she was stacking them up on the counter in no particular order, Frank walked into the room.

"Good morning," he said, not noticing what she was doing or even bothering to look. "I'm starving, Anna, thank goodness you have food ready. Look, I need to make some calls after breakfast, so I need to know where the telephone is." Anna looked up at him over an armload of papers.

"It's in the library. Past the entry on your right, but pleeeeeease wait until I've had a chance to get the paper work from the desk in there -- besides, you're not getting away that quickly and there's so much to talk about and more even

to do!" She dropped the stack of papers onto the table and pointed to a chair. "Sit down Frank!"

"Anna, why do you always have to rush things? My God, I've been here for less than twenty-four hours. Just calm down. We have plenty of time for our so-called 'work'." He looked out the window with a disgusted grin. "What do you call this jungle, eh Anna?" Frank was surprised when there was no response. He looked at her. She turned her head away and said nothing. Half-way through a biscuit he motioned for her to get his tea. He also waited for her to start up the conversation again but she just stood silently over the teapot waiting for the water to come to a boil. Frank liked watching her make his tea. He liked watching her quick movements, and thought how much like a frightened bird she seemed; small and quick and frightened, but he liked her frail appearance, her small, elegant waist and tiny hands with no rings. Her nose was perfect, a little turned up, but generally how a nose should be. Sometimes he thought that, if not for her over-powering nature, she might disappear altogether. He watched her more closely now and began to sense that there was something different about her, but quickly decided that it must only be some sort of short-lived mood. There were very few things that Frank counted on in life, and one of those things was the fact that Anna would always be Anna, and he felt that he knew her better than anyone could know a person. Frank was so busy thinking about how odd it was that at this moment he didn't want her to change at all, that he didn't even hear the soft knocking at the kitchen door.

"Frank, please get the door for me," Anna said as she poured the hot water into his teacup. "Frank! Pleeeeeeeease get the door!" Frank snapped out

of it and headed toward the door. When he opened the door he looked down upon a short little priest. He almost burst out laughing, but Anna was right at his heels inviting this mouse of a man to come in, and a bit too eagerly thought Frank.

"Father Ravi, what brings you back here so soon this morning? I thought by now you'd be out with the children. What is it?" Father Ravi shuffled in the door only a little way and looked directly at Anna.

"Anna, we must talk." His eyes never veered away from Anna's face, and he appeared unaware of Frank's presence. Little beads of sweat formed on his clear wide, brown, forehead, and Anna knew by looking at him that this was important business. They both left the kitchen and headed to the library with not so much as a word to Frank. Frank stood there suspiciously staring at this strange little black and brown figure getting smaller and smaller down the hallway.

"Well," he said to himself, "I guess I don't count for much this morning." He laughed nervously and stared down the hall. When they hadn't returned within half an hour, Frank headed down the hallway toward the library, but stopped short of the two big wooden doors. What he wanted to do was burst through the doors and demand to know what the hell was going on, and that is exactly what he normally would have done, but for some reason, a reason he could not even explain to himself, his instincts told him to stop. He stood in front of those doors for a few minutes debating about it, and then backed down the hall to the kitchen. An hour later Frank found himself wandering through the downstairs rooms scanning the collection of junk that Anna had accumulated over the years. Every once in a while he would check the library door, but it

remained shut for a better portion of the day, and as the hours passed, Frank became more and more suspicious and angry. At about five o'clock, he fell asleep on the sofa in the living room.

"AAAAAAnna!" Frank sat up in a cold sweat and looked around the room. It was dark and no one was there. He wondered if anyone had heard his scream, if his scream had pierced through those thick library doors, and then he wondered if he had really screamed out loud or just in his dream. He felt nauseous, and his hands were cold and shaking. He slowly got up from the sofa and walked out into the entry. The library doors were open and it was dark inside. He walked in and fumbled around for the light. Once he could see, he noticed that the enormous oak desk was entirely cleaned up and tidy, not a paper on it, and there was no evidence that anyone had been in this room for hours. The entire house was frighteningly quiet. There was no note in the kitchen, but all of the dishes had been collected, washed, and put away. He was completely alone. "Damn it!" he said, and headed for the staircase. It had never in the past occurred to him to be afraid on Anna's behalf, but he was afraid, and frustrated at the thought that there was no way for him to find out what was going on. He was sure, though, that something was going on. After searching the house one time he went upstairs to his room. He thought about sitting down at the typewriter for a while, but was too nervous to write. Looking around for something to occupy himself with, he remembered the diary he had seen in one of the downstairs rooms. Reading that would probably take up some time, he thought, so he went back downstairs to find the diary. There it was, left on a small round table next to an overstuffed chair and reading lamp. It never occurred to him that this would break any rules of privacy, so he began

reading. It had been a long time since he had read anything written by Anna. The diary was actually a journal, full of notes, partial poems, interesting lines, the beginning sentences of several different stories, and a few quotes from authors whom she admired. He read the entire journal and couldn't help feeling that it was quite unfair that Anna's writing, even in a simple journal, was far better than anything he had ever written. He knew he could never hope to be that good, no matter how long he spent trying to learn. For a long time he sat there with the journal closed in his lap and wondered if he should continue trying. All of the way up the stairs to his room he thought about that journal and he felt cheated. Standing under the hot water in the shower, he continued to feel sorry for himself and for Anna, and for the strange way their lives had gone. Before climbing into bed he opened the bedroom door so she would know he was there. He laid his head on the pillow and closed his eyes.

Anna removed her shoes and slipped into the garden door. She knew that Frank would not hear her from up there on the third floor, but she had to be sure; the last thing she wanted tonight was to answer any questions concerning Father Ravi's visit. Tomorrow would be a better time for all of that, and it made her sad to think she had to keep all of this from Frank, but she was determined that her plan come off without a hitch. As much as she had loved Frank in the past, she also knew that she had changed since then, and if she spent too much time in the presence of those scrutinizing grey eyes of his, she wouldn't have the courage or the desire to go through with her decision. She headed for her bedroom on the first floor, but as she passed the staircase she couldn't stop herself from going up. She tried very hard to remember the times when he had been madly in love with her but could only manage to picture a few moments

when their passion had been great, greater than she could describe. What had happened between those times and now was so complicated. "How did it come to this?" she asked herself. "I just don't know how I let this much time go by." Her voice was a whisper though there was no one there to listen, but that didn't matter because she had spent much of the last three years alone, and had grown used to talking to herself. Even though she was still young, she felt, at this moment, old and tired.

Leaning against the door jam, Anna had just enough light from the hallway to see the side of Frank's face as he slept. He was still extraordinary to look at, even with his deep grey eyes shut. The cut of his face was clean and well-defined, and his hair soft, soft brown. One hand lay on the pillow next to his face. He still wore the ring. It was the only thing that she had given him that meant anything to her. She had always admired his hands, soft and tan and strong. Most women found Frank threateningly handsome, and he had his share of women. Anna knew it better than anyone else. She walked softly over to the light in the hallway and flicked it off, then she crept back into his room, took off her clothes and slipped into bed next to him. She placed her hand in the middle of his back and left it there for what seemed like a long time, then moved her body closer in next to his. He stirred a bit and rolled over to face her. Neither one of them said a word, but they made love for a very long time and fell asleep wrapped around each other in the middle of the bed. It all happened very, very quietly.

The next morning Frank woke up alone, and he wondered if it had all been a dream, or even part of a nightmare. In a hurry to get downstairs to the kitchen, he threw on a robe and ran a comb through his hair. This morning he

wanted to watch her as she poured hot water into his teacup, wanted to see just how green her eyes would be, wanted to know why she had come to his room, wanted more than anything at this moment to be a part of Anna's morning.

Anna was sitting at the table when Frank came into the kitchen. She was sitting very still, and her red hair was hanging freely down her back. Just as he approached her she turned in her chair to face him, but when she opened her mouth to speak a loud knocking came at the garden door. They both paused and stared at each other. Anna took a breath and went to the door. It was Father Ravi, standing there in the rain with a most worried look on his face. Frank remembered his robe and became embarrassed and angry, and then suspicious all over again. He wanted to shout at this nosy little man and tell him to just leave them alone for a while, but Anna quickly pulled Father Ravi into the kitchen nook and began pouring him a cup of tea. "Excuse me," Frank hissed in the direction of Father Ravi, "but we were about to have our breakfast, ALONE."

Father Ravi looked around, avoiding Frank's eyes, and started to speak, but Anna stepped in front of him and said sternly, with her lips together, "Frank, why don't you go upstairs and take your shower." She raised her eyebrows and motioned with her head for Frank to leave the room.

"Of course, damn it, if that's really what you want!" Frank shouted at her.

He had her cornered now, he thought, but she only stood her ground and replied curtly, "Yes, that's exactly what I want." Frank stamped out of the room feeling quite out of control and confused, but he had no choice, he had been dismissed. He turned the water all the way to HOT, and stayed under the shower spray until he felt he had his temper under control. He had wanted this morning to be pleasant, to be different, to be perhaps something good and new

for the both of them. He made an ugly picture in his head of the priest standing pathetically in the rain on the doorstep knocking and knocking away and no one answering the door because the two people inside were busy making love in every room of the house while the priest got wet. Frank laughed and thought himself quite clever, but then he remembered that it was Anna who allowed the priest to interrupt their morning, and it was Anna who had asked him to leave the room. He just didn't understand what was going on.

Down in the kitchen Anna was hurriedly signing papers and checking things off of lists, and looking constantly toward the entry to see if Frank was on his way back in. She was nervous and Father Ravi stood by her at the counter taking short little breaths. When she finished signing the last paper, she quickly handed the pen to Father Ravi, pointed to a blank line at the bottom of the sheet and said, "Sign her, Father, and it's all yours."

Father Ravi placed his hand on hers, brown against white, and said, "Are you really sure, Anna?"

"I'm sure, Father Ravi, just sign, and hurry please!" As soon as Father Ravi had signed the paper, Anna shoved the whole pile into a yellow envelope, placed the envelope in Father Ravi's hands, and walked over to the door. "You must leave now, I need time to tell him." Father Ravi hesitated.

"Are you really sure, Anna?" he said again and didn't move.

"Father, pleeeeeease, I know what I am doing, now go and don't come back until Saturday, or this whole thing will fall apart." Father Ravi went quietly out the door and disappeared into the wet jungle.

Frank came in as Anna was closing the door. "He's gone I hope?" said Frank sarcastically. "Really Anna, I just can't figure out why you like that man,



he seems like a nasty little thing. What is it with you two anyway?"

"What do you mean by that?" Anna's fists were clenched, and her eyes were full of anger and resentment. Frank was shocked. For the first time, in all the years he had known her, Anna seemed cold, distant, and hateful. He was at a loss for words for a moment and sat down at the table to think. Anna quickly came over to him and started to touch his shoulder, but he pulled away and waved his hand at her as if to tell her that she was now the one being dismissed. She backed away and stood there. She had no idea how she was going to explain all of this to him. She started pacing back and forth in front of the windows and then she walked over to the chair opposite Frank's and sat down. She grabbed his hand before he could do anything about it and looked him straight in the eyes.

"Frank, I'm sorry about this morning. I didn't mean for things to get off to such a bad start. I need so desperately to talk to you, but I just don't know where to begin, and I'm afraid." She hesitated a moment and looked away, "I've made some decisions that you need to know about." Frank looked at her, confused and anxious.

"Let's have some tea first, okay?" The unsteadiness in his voice was obvious to Anna, so she got up from the table to get them both something to eat and drink. She felt that he realized now that this was serious and she also knew that he would do anything to avoid it. She was very well aware of what he thought of her, had always thought of her, and yet, surprisingly enough, there was a part of her that still loved him. It was a dangerous spot to be in.

"Okay, Frank, here is the tea, but we must talk now. It's not fair to let this go on any further. When you first arrived all I could think about was our work,

and how long it had been since we had worked together, but now I realize that I wanted you here so that I could, once and for all, settle this thing between us, and that is exactly what I am going to do." She looked him in the eye without blinking and waited for a response. He found it difficult now to look at her and wished that he could find some excuse, any excuse to get up and leave the table, but there was no excuse. He sat there silently. Anna was becoming frustrated, her jaw was set like steel and her eyes began to water. These were not tears of love he saw in her eyes. In fact, the only time he had seen her cry was when she was angry.

"Frank, you must talk to me! This is not a situation that concerns only me. For once in your life, you are going to have to get involved. You are going to really have to do some talking now, and I don't want to hear any of your stupid excuses."

"It doesn't seem that I have to say anything at all. It seems to me that you have already made up your mind about something, whatever this is about, and, knowing you, I doubt there is anything that I can say or do to change it. Am I right?"

"That's so typical of you, Frank, passing everything off onto me as if my life has never had anything to do with your life. For God's sake Frank, after tomorrow everything will be gone!" She paused nervously, "Everything, Frank, everything!" She was almost shouting at this point and this startled Frank enough to really listen to what she was saying.

"Gone? What do you mean exactly by everything?"

"What I mean, exactly, is that by tomorrow night, everything in this house will be auctioned off to the highest bidder. I mean, exactly, that, not only will

everything in this house be auctioned off, but the house itself is going too. All of the papers have been signed. It's a 'done deal' as they say." Anna exhaled. She had finally come out with it, and now what was he going to do about it?

While she waited, she looked up at Frank and saw that his face had gone white, his grey eyes wide with disbelief, and he looked like he was about to vomit. He still couldn't find the words amid the confusion in his mind to respond to her, but he was beginning to hate her all over again.

"So this is what you and that shitty little priest have been up to?!" He spit the words at her in disgust. "Well, I can't believe that you are really going to do it, and don't you need my signature anyway? And knowing all of this what the hell was last night about? Or did you think that after last night you could talk me into giving my permission for this so-called auction? Well there is no way in hell that I am going to cooperate with you so you might as well forget it! And you might as well forget about me sticking around for this event. As a matter of fact, I should just march up those stairs, pack my bags, and leave. Leave for good this time. Then what will you do, Anna, huh?" At this point Frank's voice was booming across the kitchen. "Tell me, dear, then what will you do? I'd really like to know. I'd also like to know what you plan to do with yourself once all of this is gone, because if you think you are going to leave here with me you are dead wrong." Anna watched him pace across the floor, watched his eyes glare at her with hatred, watched him clench his fists, but she wasn't afraid. As a matter of fact she almost thought him comical. The childish display of ranting and raving made him seem pathetic to Anna.

When she thought he had cooled down she folded her hands on the table and said, "Frank, sit down. Frank, pleeeeeease sit down, there's more. First

of all... well... you see, I don't need your permission, or your signature to do any of this." Anna stopped for a moment to allow this information to sink in. "This house, and all that is in it, belongs entirely to me. Your name does not appear on any of the papers. When I bought this house do you ever recall having anything at all to do with it? Of course not. You were off somewhere doing whatever it is you do. You see, I don't even remember what it is you do anymore, Frank. Anyway, my life went on, alone, and the more you were away the more I began to make decisions without you. Father Ravi doesn't even really know who you are."

Frank stood up again. He pointed his finger in her face and yelled, "Fuck Father Ravi! Or is that you what have been doing? I think this time you've really lost your mind! What on earth has that man got you talked into anyway?!" Anna wanted to slap him, but she kept herself under control.

"Sit down, Frank." Frank sat down, but refused to look at her. "I am going to ignore your sick remarks, but I don't want to hear anymore of them, or you might as well do what you said and pack your bags and leave. Calm down and listen to me. You might be interested in hearing the rest of this because there is something I need from you."

"That's just great, Anna, something YOU need from ME? Somehow I should have expected this. In fact, I did expect this but could never bring myself to believe it. So what is it, Anna? Am I finally going to be out of debt with you?" Frank knew that would hurt, and it did, but he didn't care. Right now he wanted to hurt her. He wanted her to know how much pain their relationship had caused him. He wanted her to know how much time he had spent hating her. He wanted her to know that he wasn't going to put up with it any longer, but

these were things he could never bring himself to say because there was still something about her he couldn't let go. Anna's eyes were dry when he looked into them, and he saw nothing there that he expected. Her eyes were filled with desperation. This was something new. As his dread began to grow he thought to himself, maybe this time she expects me to take her with me?, and he knew that would never work. No, no. Things could not change in that respect, she would just have to accept it.

"Frank, all I want you do to is to sign one little piece of paper, and it has nothing to do with the auction. In fact, I wasn't even going to tell you about the auction because it has nothing to do with you and me. The auction wasn't supposed to happen for three more weeks but there seems to have been some confusion about dates. That happens often here." She looked out the window and watched the rain run down the window pane. "Father Ravi, who has been a very good and honest friend, was kind enough to help with the papers yesterday. It was all quite confusing, but we worked it out. He has an understanding soul, you know. You used to have a soul like his, Frank, do you remember that?" She looked toward the window again and crossed her arms around herself. "I thought you might still have some of that left in you, but it wasn't there last night."

"Get on with it, Anna." Frank had heard enough. He just wanted to get to the bottom line.

"Anyway, I'm selling everything because there is no more money. No more money, Frank. I will have enough to move back to England. I've rented a cottage in the country near Arendel. There is a small sum that I have pledged to the orphanage. I have a job lined up in town. It's what I want to do, Frank,

really." Anna looked away from the window hoping to catch Frank's eyes, but he was staring at his hands and she could tell that he was thinking. He could hardly be angry now, she had simply told him the truth without anger or accusations or fear. "I plan to stay there for a very long time. I am done moving around. I want a home, Frank, that's all, a home." Frank leaned back in his chair and put his hands behind his head. He looked tired and sad. He was thinking now of what it was that he wanted, and what he wanted at this very moment was to be able to somehow tell Anna that he loved her. But he had spent too much time hating her, being obsessed with her, avoiding her, and now that he really thought about it, he could not honestly say that he loved her, but he didn't want to let go, and he didn't want to live without her.

"Okay Anna, if this is what you really want. You know I can't help you financially, but I'll do what I can. So where is this little piece of paper that you want me to sign?" Anna got up from the table and disappeared down the hallway. He watched her walk away and noticed how smooth and soft her walk had become, now much her hair had grown down her back, almost to her waist. He wondered if he could adjust to making trips to such a cold damp place as England, but if that was where she was going to go then he'd just have to get used to it. He might even try to visit her more often, maybe even stay with her longer. He would think about it. She came back into the room with a paper in her hand. Frank could tell that it was a legal document from the seal that stood out in the lower right hand corner. He noticed how smooth and white her hands were holding that piece of paper. He had always thought her hands were beautiful. She placed the paper on the table with those hands and turned it so that Frank could read the print.

"Anna, there must be some mistake, this is a divorce certificate!"

"I know, it's a very simple process here" was all she said. He blinked and looked at her in disbelief. There was nothing in her eyes that told him she would change her mind. She handed him the pen. He sat there for a long time thinking about what to do. The hand with the pen in it was shaking and Frank felt cold. This is not what he thought was suppose to happen now, not at all, but something within him did not have the power to prevent it. This is what she wanted. It seemed to him that everything in his life happened or didn't happen because of what Anna wanted, or perhaps he really had misjudged her all along. No, he thought to himself, he had not been wrong, but what was he supposed to do now? He looked at her with this paper lying on the table between them and saw that with one word, one honest, sincere, and loving word he might be able to change things. After staring at her for what seemed a long time, he opened his mouth to speak, and then said nothing. Frank signed on the dotted line right where Anna pointed.

"There" she said, "now that's a done deal too." Frank could not look at her. She could always see his thoughts better than anyone else, and he would miss that. He quickly got up from the table and left the room, leaving Anna alone holding her one piece of paper.

On Saturday morning, Anna sat in the library looking out of the window on occasion to see how things were progressing. The auction was being conducted on the front porch and the auctioneer's voice, barely audible from where Anna sat, sounded like the humming of bees. Father Ravi was there to supervise and explain things to any interested parties and to interpret if necessary. She looked around the room. This was the one room in her house

that she had spent most of her time in and she would miss the view of the roses that lined the front walk. Father Ravi never understood how she managed to grow them so well in this climate, but grow them she did. Thinking back to when she first arrived at this house, she remembered how she insisted that she must be able to see roses from the library windows.

There were boxes of books stacked against the wall opposite the windows; none of these would go to England with her, it was just too expensive. The only thing she had kept from this room were manuscripts of her own work. Her own work. It seemed like stuff that had nothing to do with her now. She walked quietly out into the entry and inspected the three small suitcases that would carry her things to England. The only other things she decided to take with her fit into a small leather trunk. Among those things were teacups, some photographs, a few family heirlooms, and her journal. She thought to herself that everything now seemed to be in its rightful order. Walking out of the front door, she caught Father Ravi's eye and motioned him around to the side of the house. "I must say good-bye now, Father Ravi. There's not much time before the car arrives for me. You will see to it that everything is taken care of here, won't you? And be sure to transfer the funds to my bank in England as soon as possible." She looked at him and knew that he would miss their Tuesday morning talks. "I will always be indebted to you for all of your help."

"Indebted, Anna? That's not quite the way I picture it." He paused and looked into the garden. "Is he gone now, Anna?"

"Yes, he's gone, and I doubt that I'll see him again. He left yesterday morning, early, without a word. I didn't even have a chance to say good-bye, but then I've been saying good-bye to him, Father, for many years." Just then a



car pulled up the long drive. The driver hopped out and Anna pointed him toward the front door. He tossed her bags into the trunk of the car and got back in behind the wheel. "We are all set, Ma'm."

Anna turned to Father Ravi one last time and gave him a short tight hug. Looking away from the roses in front of her house, she climbed into the back seat of the car and rolled down the window. "It's a beautiful day isn't it, Father Ravi?"

"Think, dear sir, of the world you carry within you, and call this thinking what you will; whether it be remembering your own childhood or yearning toward your own future--only be attentive to that which rises up in you and set it above everything that you observe about you. What goes on in your innermost being is worthy of your whole love;...."

From "Letters to a Young Poet," Rainer Maria Rilke