

Moya Simons

WATCHING

Through the window I see them. The couple, with the baby, walking down the street. She is about thirty and she holds the child against her breast. Her clothes are loose fitting and brightly coloured. The child nestles, koala style, legs and arms coiled about her. The woman smiles full-moon up to the man.

Knowing what I know, I want to speak to her before she passes by. Want to warn her. But would she listen to the woman who runs into the street, the woman who is middle-aged, wide around the girth, trouble-faced, hair like ragged seaweed?

The man smiles half-moon down to her. He has a large forehead and hair which is wispy and of ill-defined colour. And a beard. Yes, he has a beard which covers the weak chin and lends him an air of affected intellectualism.

The child is the trust between them. She murmurs against her mother's breast, "Ah, ah."

I am sitting at the window watching. I am moulded into an upright chair with a hard back, my own hard back pressed against it, through it, stuck fast. The window is streaked and I cannot understand why, for just yesterday I washed it clean and dried it thoroughly, so as not to leave smear marks. For I like to look through it and see things just as they are, without the melancholy abstraction of distortion.

If I lean out the window and say, "Hey you" ... would she look up at me? Would she frown and squint a little at my face or would she not see me at all, but just the thin strands of curtain against the pane being sucked this way and that, heaving in and out like laboured breath.

When she gave birth to the child the man was with her. He stood behind her and encouraged her to push, now not to push, now to push. Her face was covered with fine sweat. He said later that she had not cried, she had just made little grunting noises.

"I was in too much pain to cry," she said, but he had not understood this.

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She is remembering now this naked child of theirs curled newborn on her rounded stomach. I can tell by her look as she turns her face to him. She is morning sun and he is the coolness in the wind that comes just after dusk. But she doesn't know that yet.

Now they stand under an autumn tree. The light catches her brown hair and it is autumn brown too, burnished with gold. The man and she stand there for a while, and the child turns one sleepy eye outward, one eye away from the breast to the universe. The child looks new-moon at the world through this one eye.

The three of them disappear under that tree. They have gone into the ether, and left me at the window, just watching.

Purple clouds and grey footpath. Street lights and sirens. Overcoats and shuffled gait. This is what I see.

I am sighing. The long sigh of remembrance. That which is blown in and out by tides and wind and song and rain.

I look in the mirror and touch my leathered cheeks, my heavy lids, my cold-moon lips.

The earth revolves.