

Visions

by Bill Lapham

In the morning's low light a child who was not my child extended her hand away from her face and brushed the edge of the window with the tip of her finger. She traced the edge of the glass with a tender touch, and opened a cut that began to bleed. A drop streaked the front of her dress.

She did not whimper, as if she felt no pain; she shed no tears, as if her well was dry; she did not act to staunch the bleeding, as if she had no worries. She was as calm as the altar.

A woman who may have been her mother or may not have been her mother reached for a handkerchief inside her handbag, bandaged the cut with it, and held the injured finger in her own closed hand.

Looking up at the sound of fracturing glass, they saw rays of light shear through crystal prisms, colors dancing on metric vectors, a retinal choreography that shifted each of them in her domain. Fissurefans spread in orchidfloral patterns: cleaving, crawling, pieces falling.

The woman sat in the pew and lifted the child into her arms. The recipe inside them where deep secrets keep, stirred and flowed and bubbled over the brim. Their faces were bathed in warm pastel flames that set their imaginations alight.

The woman and the child delighted in the spectral vision, but said nothing, and knew each other as if for the first time.

