

Trompe l'oeil

by Bill Yarrow

Every morning he'd stand in the driveway and look out beyond the maple at the empty street. One morning he lost his balance and, being drunk, fell backwards against a paving stone. As simple as that he was dead. After her grief had subsided, the wife felt immediate relief. Suddenly she was free to abandon or pursue loneliness but that was easier said than done. For over thirty years he had been a dutiful spouse. "It may take decades," said her therapist, "for the memories to dissipate." "Make new ones fast," said her friends, "that's the best way." But that too was easier said than done. It had been so long she had forgotten how to remember new things. The past had become a kind of poltergeist and refused to be dislodged. What kind of life had she had which consisted only of neglect and threats and the occasional fist? Upon awakening, that was all she could remember. Nothing else possessed her mind. His fingers still clutched at her from beyond the grave. "I'll never escape the horror of our time together." That's what she felt. "The cell door's wide open but I can't even walk out," she chided herself. She contemplated suicide then reconsidered. "I'd be worse off dead," she concluded. That night, in a dream, she was visited by the Lord. He touched her temple with a whip. When she awoke, the world looked wholly different though it was just the same.

