

Repetitions

by Dianne McKnight-Warren

The couple sit at an outside table at McDonalds. The mother, a ruined-young beauty gives their baby girl Coke out of a supersize plastic glass too fast and baby girl chokes. Coke comes out her mouth, lands on the front of her white shirt, blooms brown-ringed stains that match the ones already there--more water damage, old wallpaper.

The mother tips the glass up to baby girl's face again, doesn't notice when baby girl's wet fists push the glass away and she cries. Nothing on this September day interests this mother, not even the light shimmering like glass all around her. She stares beyond the shiny cars in the parking lot, beyond the sign that reads "Billions and Bilions Served."

The dad is real skinny, real young, pale with hair the dull color of cumin, a spice you can't buy here. A knit shirt stretches over his shoulders, bones like wire, a gray shirt, the same color as the ashes on the end of the Marlboro he grinds out in the foil ashtray.

He has slid down in his plastic chair, his legs long in front and he looks all the way down them, all the way past his feet to concrete, to a few dead cigarettes.

The mother leaves for the restroom. Short shorts, flip flops flip flop. Pregnant again, she pushes the glass door forward with an outstretched arm, her hand flat on the glass like a slap.

Behind baby girl, behind her high chair, a trash can sits stuffed with trash, the door on the lid stopped mid-swing by bags and Styrofoam boxes, half-empty cups and other fast food detritus. Melted white ice cream dribbles down from the top of the heap, a garbage sundae.

The dad goes to the 7-11 next door for more smokes. Never looks back. Car after car turns in, passes by the golden arches, those fake rainbows. Baby girl sits at the end, a pot of gold, her hands slapping and splashing the Coke puddles on the plastic tray in front of her.

Yellow jackets hover over the trash like they want that garbage sundae oh so bad. Some crawl all over it. Baby girl splashes splashes Coke on everything everything.

Yellow jackets dart all angles. Some dart around baby girl. One lands. The first.

