

Some Pianos

by Gary Percesepe

A woman I knew died decades ahead of her burial. We were children when we met but only by a little; we helped raise each other, bearing witness at last to the mystery of sex. She played piano for hours in the moldy practice rooms of the dingy college we attended on old upright pianos that have since been sent shrieking to the junkyards of Ohio, their strings loosened and bare ivory keys stripped, their skinny mahogany legs hacked to pieces. And like children we watched each other warily at the cemetery after the tornado that carefully placed the second floor of our dormitory in the middle of the street. The first floor was intact, and so were we, so I asked her to marry me.

Which seemed a good idea. That way we wouldn't be lonely and our "sensitivity" would no longer go unnoticed and besides we would one day have children, blond and good, with her blue eyes and my whatever, that *je ne sais quoi* that I prized at the time.

We bought a grand piano at Steinway Hall on 57th Street after 9/11, chased uptown by the dust of death and awakening from dreams of miniature jumpers stuck in the icing of white wedding cakes, hundreds of these cakes posted to bulletin boards in Union Square. I kited a check and put the balance on a gold Amex card and a week later the piano arrived.

She never played it.

Some mornings it is hard to shake the chill, though Ohio is far from the peaked mountains of Colorado where we spent the first years of marriage. And here by the railroad tracks the summer sun burns away every imperfection and I hang like a noose loosely attached to a mirror that shows the clear reflection of her long disappointment, and await the night when there is nothing left to beg.

