

No More Little Bridget

by James Claffey

Split rock, damp grass, thick mud, wet stones. The moon rises over the Chismahoo, catching the orb weavers in silver relief. Rainfall for days now, the atmospheric river an avalanche of moisture, a slipstream of amnesia—

Pissing down

Lashing

bucketing

teeming

pouring from the heavens

Strange to lie staring at the ceiling—the band of light, a dream, a life—in a bind. The carriage clock bongs twenty times; the springs wound too tight and the pickpockets in the streets pilfering the bright, flamed oranges from the fruit vendor's cart.

I'm awake, the pounding rain on the roof a symphony of loudness, a Philip Glass nightmare. I have no remedy, nothing but an acceleration towards disaster. My problem is one of production, the difficulty of creating a bright citrus marmalade from the musty brackish fruit of the lower forty acres. The oranges have black scale, greenish mold and spider shit, even scrubbing them with a wire brush makes no inroads on processing them.

I'm old now, no more letters from home, my mother's garden harbors no more begonias, no more father, or drink-riddled aunts slumped in their armchairs covered in soot, having cleaned the chimney themselves and spent the money on gin and After-Eights, no more little Bridget, home from hockey at fifteen, a clot in the leg and a name carved on the family gravestone: 1913.

Over and over, the long rites of time, the burden of later life, weariness, confusion, Death. I leave the bed, feel my way through the dark house and open the back door onto the garden. Myriad invisible spider eyes are hidden in the downpour, the trees drenched and delirious in the arguing rainfall. I spend my time sitting on the

back step—poison oak reddening my arm—under the eaves, waiting
to escape.

