

Another Dream

by John Riley

"I fly in my dreams," his mother said. "It's my privilege."

The kitchen is not spotless. She works slowly, wiping the counter with a dishcloth. She wears a pink housecoat and her hands are red from the dishwater.

"There is never a situation in my dreams I can't fly out of. People come to me with their nightmares. I say baloney. Just flap your arms and fly to another dream."

He sits on the slightly bent aluminum chair at the Formica table. His thumb rubs a cigarette burn in its yellow top.

"Most people are afraid to fly. Your father was. I was for years. Now I can make every curve or angle I want. It's the thing that makes me the happiest."

He wants to speak up. To say she deserves all the happiness she can get. But he isn't ready to talk.

She stops rubbing the counter and turns to him. "Do you fly, son? Tell me, do you fly in your dreams?"

When he tries to answer the words don't come. She stares at him with that look he knew so well. The one that said, "I'm not looking away until you answer."

He smiles at her, turns his head, and whispers, "I flew here."

