

We Talk in a Roundabout Way

by Lydia Copeland

You are a boy with a birthday bike smiling like our son, standing in a photograph surrounded by other sons, who turn rocks over and over, who keep snakes in plastic bread bags, who find the bones of something wild in the woods. You smile that way still. Today, we talk in a roundabout way, leaving out alphabets and lengths of naps and how many blocks an 18-month-old can stack in a tower. It is just us in a restaurant, eating big bowls of noodles with porcelain spoons and taking pictures of our teacups with the tea still inside. You are my Anglo-Saxon, with your long limbs and high bones. You tell me about the asteroid belt, all the near collisions and how everything clusters into everything else. My mind sees white hot implosions, blue tails of comets. I begin to think of the poems I read in high school, the poems that weren't burned in church fires, the sky's candle, the sailors who lament sorrow to an everlasting God. We link arms on the avenues, step around the tourists from other countries. I kiss your face, and for a block or two I am a vapor around you, a summer curtain. The two of us move without thinking about what goes where, which corner to turn. We step after traffic and a whole crowd follows. In the public library, I show you books of men and women made from vinyl and bronze. They recline in the light by the pool or lean against buildings like cowboys. You are already aware, have seen these people before and know about the others not in the book. When the streetlights turn on and the dark sky is lined with stars we can't see but know are there, we turn back. Two trains to home and a walk in the cold. Our faces grow stiff, words become fog. We dream of a garden one day with muddy vegetables and sun warmed things, a porch that goes all the way around. Stores with shirt buttons and shampoo under the same roof. A car to take us there. There will be sons and daughters, smiling teachers, old

buildings full of ghosts. We'll have finches in the yard. We'll see the grass again.

