

Snatch (6)

by Mathew Paust

“Scream.”

“What?” His reaction was spontaneous, despite a synchronous understanding of what she meant as she uttered the imperative. He felt her face turn to him. He kept his eyes on her ballpoint, frozen a half inch above the pad.

“It might help.”

Her voice had softened further, reaching a tonal intimacy that cupped his heart with an easy, intuitive confidence. Alarmed, he raised his eyes to her face, and in doing so he heard it, the scream. He thought at first it was Aggie, that her humming had moved to a higher register, ascending to soprano or beyond. A ragged crescendoing shriek, it seemed. Could it yet be music? A cry of terror? The questions went moot when the swelling sound oscillated and then became two. Aggie's ditty tripped away, leaving the shriek in solo.

He knew it now. Knew it well. He moved his focus to the face, and realized he knew *it* now, too.

