

Visitation

by Phillis Ideal

We sat up in bed. It's two o'clock in the morning. Blinding circular flashlight beams probe through the half pulled shades. Magnified black silhouettes of men's torsos lumber back and forth in the yard. We are in a fishbowl and being invaded.

Someone presses the doorbell long and loud and hard. Gene jumps into his sweatpants and springs to the front door. His voice booms "Who are you and what the hell do you want?"

"It is the police."

"You stand back. Show me your badge before I open this door."

There were three uniformed policemen and one pushes his badge through the door and says, "A call was made that there is a woman trapped in one of your windows, and we want to know if you can identify her?"

"What? What window?"

Now the police are in the hall, tall and bulging with buckles and belts equipped with handguns, cuffs, flashlights, and batons. I am barefoot in my gown, and Gene has thrown on a shirt. They lead us through our house as if they know the way. Through the large living room windows, more policemen with zigzagging lights are searching the grounds. We circle back to our bedroom and open the side door that faces the back of my studio.

I see a woman, mid-twenties, with flaming dyed cadmium red hair. Half her body and one leg are hanging out of the studio bathroom window. Her white face is spotlit against the night, and I think, "Am I dreaming or seeing an apparition?" Howling in pain, she yelps, "I didn't mean to break in. I was just looking for the little boy."

I walk out of the house and see that the fire truck and ambulance are lining the street. The yard is swarming with police and firemen trying to get her unstuck from the 20" X 20" bathroom window. I trail through my cluttered studio and see her other half, rear end and other leg, straddling a windowsill. In between sobs, she

woefully says, " I was just looking for the little boy. I heard him calling."

The ambulance takes her to the hospital, and the police stay and talk to us. They speculate that she was wandering down the back of neighborhood yards, trying doors and found my studio to be open.

She went in and locked the door behind her. Disoriented and wanting out of this dark cavernous space, she was drawn toward the light of the full moon from the bathroom window.

Concerned that she gets psychiatric care, we don't press charges but the police charge her for breaking and entering. After several days, I call the police to see what happened to her.

"Aw, she's OK. She's out on bail. She was on crack and alcohol. She was pretty sober by the time we got to the hospital and laughing about calling for a little boy and getting stuck in a window."

I now vigilantly lock my studio door.

