

Nanny

by Tyler Koch

I remember the days when my brother and I would walk down Tillman Square, careful to avoid the cracks zigzagging along the ground. Well I did. My brother made a point to step on every one.

We were alike my brother and I. Also different. Like the shades of red between brick and blood. Close but no cigar. My brother always liked cigars, even though mother forbid us from smoking. Relax, he used to say, you're worrying like a nanny. That's what he called me, Nanny. Smoke would twirl and dance around his head and he would smile. Don't worry Nanny.

I would eat with my brother every Wednesday night. He would bring his friends and we would all cram into the undersized booths like triplets in the womb. This is my brother Nanny, he would say to his followers, he's special. But no one believed him. I would sit in that booth watching my brother. They followed him like dogs. Starving dogs.

Nanny, he used to say when the lights were off, do you love me? I love you Nanny. I laid beneath my comforters staring up at the ceiling. He talked like this when the world was dark. Don't be frightened Nanny, my brother would say, I will protect you.

Mother loved my brother. He's a special boy, she told her twittering lady friends during tea, he's going to go far. How far? they would ask. Past the place where we can see.

Father wasn't around. Mother said he was a no good scoundrel, but what does that mean? My brother knew. He's a womanizer, he said. What's that? My brother shook his head. You're a babe Nanny, you're just a babe.

On special days, my brother would say, Nanny, let's watch a movie. We used to sneak in the back door of the nickel theaters. The feeling of thrill and triumph gripped my body. Let's sit and forget the

world Nanny, my brother whispered. I would nod and smile. Let's pretend we're happy.

