

RANDY LUNDY

Insomnia

You come down the stairs in robe and slippers, old knees croaking, creaking like the wood beneath the worn carpet. Your father sits in the dark at your kitchen table staring out the window, just as you remember him, smoking a Sportsman and drinking coffee. Perhaps it is only his reflection he sees in the midnight glass. His mind and heart, rooms where too much has happened for either of you to bear.

Since you cannot sit with him, you wander out the back door to have a cigarette. He will not join you.

Cool damp wind from the west, dew in the grass swallowing starlight. In four hours, the sunrise, both the sun and its light, will already be eight minutes into the past when you see them.

Into the past, as if anything can enter there, into that.

Apple blossoms in the trees, suffusing the dark with their sweetness, seven blackbirds raising a racket at your presence, while the neighbours sleep. Walk down to the stone-pile where the purple spears of lupine grow. In autumn, you will collect the seeds from brittle, bird-boned, skeletal stalks, dry them in a clay bowl on the altar where you burn candles, sage, cedar, and sweet grass, offerings to your ancestors, and to the Buddhas who hunch there laughing.

You will try to carry one year forward into another. Again, the old ache and yearn for divinity, for absolution, for benediction.

When you return to the house, your father is gone. Again. There is no hole in the air, just the breeze from the doorway that shifts the spider webs you have allowed to multiply in the upper corners of the ceiling, on the blinds, and light fixtures. Spiders, and whatever they catch in the nets they have cast, your only companions.

This year you have discovered Cat's Eye spiders, their box-like bodies remind you of hugging a loved one through a blanket, the cancer in the protruding abdomen like cardboard folded, rigid beneath a blue fleece blanket.

There is a trapezoid of moonlight on the square, white kitchen tiles, and you wish geometry could save you. While you try to puzzle together bits of memory, *nothing*—neither a greater, nor a lesser god—is somewhere else, but nearby, doing whatever it is that *nothing* does.