

door onto the closet floor.

We're almost finished when the flashlight picks up an odd-shaped box with painted flowers on it, the kind my Gram uses to keep her hats. When Sigh and I lift the lid we find it filled with photographs, mostly of my parents with Cath and a little boy who must be James. In a lot of them, Dad's got James riding on his shoulders. I'm not in any of the pictures so I probably wasn't born yet. I tie Sigh to my belt and we lift the box onto the closet ledge before we get down.

The other stuffed animals complain because we were gone so long but they're pretty delighted when they find out they all got new clothes, shouting, "Let's see" and "Me first!" as Sigh and I put the pile in front of them. The panda pulls the safari hat way down over his eyes. Becky Rabbit kicks her legs out so everyone will notice her white leather shoes. When everyone's dressed, Sigh and I line them up on the window sill to tell about our adventures in Antattica.

When I hear my Dad yell "I'm home!", I'm dying to show him the photographs. I wait until he settles down with his newspaper and rye. Then I carry the hatbox into the recreation room and say "Hey, Dad, look what I found!"

He looks at the box and turns his head away fast: "Take it away. I don't want to look at them," he says. At dinner, he doesn't talk. He glances at me as if he's really worried and I know I've done something awful.

When he and my Mom come to kiss me goodnight, my Mom's tucking me in when she sees the animals on the windowsill. Her hand goes up to her mouth and she leaves the room. Dad leaves too. In the hall I hear her say, "Oh God, will I never have any peace?"

The next day Julianna our cleaning lady comes. When I go into my room the clothes are off my animals. Later when I sit on the stool beside Julie while she irons she says, "You shouldn't go into things without asking, Janie."

*Jane Tasker is a graduate student in English Literature at York University. She has taught Creative Writing and Radio Journalism. She recently workshopped her memoir, from which these excerpts were taken, in a Life Writing class with Susan Swan.*

## ROSITA GEORGIEVA

### On Mother's Day

I remember that noon—I was turning 12  
and I believe that 12 is a magical number—  
we gathered in the dining room without any  
noise,  
the table was silently set—the silk and silver,  
scented candles, grapes,  
the heavy decoration over the mahogany  
was ready for years for my mother's return,  
the crystal was taken out but no one dared to  
touch a glass,  
my little brother forgot about his bottle of milk,  
there was thirst in the dried, scented air  
but no one asked for water, no one complained,  
my older sister was not in a mood to tease, the  
twins were simply  
a mirror reflection, without his chronic cough  
my father was a wax weird figure leaning over  
the table  
when the clock struck and everyone's heart  
counted  
the miraculous 12, and I saw the two  
"imaginary" cats  
under the big mahogany chair arching their  
backs  
and running down the stairs one second before  
the doorbell rang,  
and the stairs creaked and her figure—exacting  
and fast  
shook the house, shot the everyday irreality,  
and her voice came from my throat  
so dry that I pictured her as a thirsty explorer  
coming from a desert,  
I couldn't see the face—only her rusty-orange  
hair  
flaming the stairs, flaming the air, flaming years  
of waiting.  
In the fire of my mother's return  
no one cried out for water.

*Rosita Georgieva's poetry appears earlier in this volume.*