

months. She wore dark glasses every day for a year until one day a friend yanked them off her and said it was time to get on with living. She began inviting neighbours in for tea as she had done before our father left. She surprised us by starting to take night school courses.

One day after the clothes had been hung, a neighbour came in for tea and looked out our kitchen door at the clothesline. Hanging close to the door was a set of pink silk Van Raalte lingerie our mother had bought for herself with her first paycheck earned as a kindergarten teacher. Matching panties, bra, and slip had been hand washed and hung to dry discretely over the porch. "Jane, whose lingerie is that?" the neighbour asked.

"Mine of course," replied our mother.

"Well, what possessed you to buy those?" laughed the neighbour. "You've no man in your life."

I heard my mother's starchy reply, "A woman doesn't need a man to buy herself nice underwear."

Neither my mother nor the neighbour realized the Van Raalte lingerie hanging in the breeze were flags of independence.

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JEANETTE LYNES

What I Knew Of Pigeons

What I knew of pigeons came from a book on Paris in the school library. Pigeons were everywhere, there –

moulting teal-plum feathers on stones, puddling doorways to underground trains, bobbing for crumbs

flung by beret-headed crones – pigeons, I concluded, were French – which must make ours some fallen,

anglicized sub-species. Pigeons bore messages – I'd forgotten that until bursting in from school

early one Monday, the Sunday china spread before my mother. She was picking a tiny carcass

clean. Pigeon, she said, swirling homemade wine in her crystal wedding goblet. She'd caught it herself –

her mother, in lean times, did the same. The bones' look of a small empress' fan clamped shut my own

growling gut. I was too stunned to probe her method: butterfly net? My skipping rope as lasso? I suddenly

found myself famished, far from France. The lower cultures

will gather what they can – she'd saved me a diminutive

drumstick. She poured me a glass. My first real drink. What my father would eat she'd no inkling.

I raised my goblet to her, to own my birth into a long line of predators.

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