

JOAN BOND

Kresge Kingston

She sits there
tight ruby lips
sipping tea
Her fingers well dressed
two cameo rings
a diamond wedding band
one gold pinkie
A handknit fuchsia cardigan
covers her sparse frame
I order tea and ask
her to pass the sugar.
"Damn good tea they serve here."
I smile

Her eyes pierce through cigarette smoke
"The cost of things nowadays . . . "
Her voice creaks on
She is Irish
has never gone back
since her arrival in '53
She lights her fourth
"I couldn't bear to see the old parts torn down
. . . only ghosts left now."
She looks at the clock
"Oh I have an appointment!"

A trembling hand
adds more red stain
to her mouth
and a fistful
of white sugar packets
slip into the maw
of her embroidered straw purse
"It's been nice speaking to you."
I mean it
Her face askance
she nods her beige wig
and steps away
neat and erect

I finish a third cup of tea
twisting the top button
on my Aran sweater
A wrinkled reflection stares at me
across the counter
Yes, they serve good tea here

Joan Bond has published in numerous literary journals. She resides on the prairies where she writes, and paints in watercolour.

NAN BRYNE

Long Island City

In 1945
An embolism pushed
Into my grandmother's brain
Her future over before we met
Like flat soda she sat all day
No fizz or bubble
A shadow in a sweater
Dark hair neatly stacked
Flowered housedress
Black pegged shoes
A grandma outline
Every Sunday afternoon we arrived
Supper was at two
Meat and potatoes in a mixing bowl
My grandfather fussed in the kitchen
Everything was liver
Never leaving her chair
Where's your coat, she'd say
Don't you know there's a war on?
This is the sixties
Long before the government
Ran the lottery
That no one wanted to win
On her lap a red vinyl pocketbook
A lifetime of secrets, matchbooks,
balls of toilet paper, bakery string
Black and white flickers
Our only diversion
Sing along with Mitch
Could things be worse?
At five ice cream would arrive
Packed in pints
From the neighborhood store
Monochrome flavors, vanilla or chocolate
Only strawberry, rich and complex
Offered any hope
We swallowed mouthfuls down
Savoring the soft cool taste
While she slowly sucked her spoon
This small delight introducing us

Nan Byrne is a recent MFA graduate of Virginia Commonwealth University. Her work has appeared in several literary magazines including Seattle Review, New Orleans Review, Potomac Review, and Phoebe.