

Third Story

By Sara Yamaka

-I turned the last heart over the last spade, she is urging him to be excited,

-and suddenly, I mean, I couldn't believe it myself at the time, all of a sudden, the dial tone came through! I just heard it click over and then, there it was...I could call you and I knew you were safe.

-Have you considered that this may be coincidence, sweetie?

-It was a game though, you know, a game to see if we could divine the suit, if we could tell which color we would turn up next...we spread the cards on the glass topped table and we took turns guessing. It was amazing, you know, we guessed right just almost all the time and we decided...

-You decided that spades were bad and hearts were good, eh?

-Well yes, because it seemed to be that way. And then of course I heard about the accident on the highway, and I was so worried, you know, but I couldn't reach you. We had no dial tone! And then I rearranged the cards and...and there it was!

-Mmmm.

Mmmm. The second he has left the room, she remembers the best part of all. It is the routine for her to remember this part now. She's all hands, running through her soft, cropped hair, massaging the roots, easing the tense muscle. She's looking around the dusty attic room for something as delicious as her own thoughts. It would be perfectly still there. Maybe there would be the creak of the white wicker loveseat which is in serious decay. Thinking about the state of the pink printed cushions would prevent her from lying there happily. Instead, she is thinking about the silence that would fill the room if the traffic, sirens, radios and shouts below could be extinguished for a moment. The light at the corner must have turned red because the traffic is muted. She is listening to him getting beer out of the mini-fridge and also to a woman who is standing, and then shaking and walking on the corner, near the bus stop.

-Some white woman lives up that street! And she's a Bitch! That's right. You got some WHITE WOMAN livin' up on that street and she is a BITCH!...

The traffic is starting again, the woman who has shouted will no longer be heard from the third story.

"She's right nonetheless" thinks the girl.

And he walks back in and puts two bottles of beer on the stained TV tray and puts the pretzels on the floor by her feet.

-Hey, you know it was a full moon that night too?

-Is that right?

-It is. Tell me a story.

-I don't know any stories. Youknowthat.

-You're right, I do. I thought I'd give it a try.

-Mmmm.

Mmmm. The girl is knowing a story and drinking pale ale and thinking now about the stained cushion, flat, cold, stained floral cushions which she throws on the floor to begin her story.

-My grandfather woke up last Tuesday morning and found Italian bread on the lawn. It was all spread around in chunks...like ripped up chunks of bread, but it was all spread around, all in an "L" shape on the front and side of the house.

-He found Italian bread on the lawn?

-Yes, absolutely he did. It is probably the most bizarre thing I've heard yet from him...It's true though, the cleaning girl saw it too. It happened two days in a row. On the second day, there was so much bread...so many hunks of this ripped off bread that he had to call the, the Giava boys to come rake it up.

-They raked it up? Geez...

-Well, yea, geez...I mean, the birds ate some of course, but they raked up the rest.

-So who did it? Does he know who...who spread the bread?

-Mrs. Cavella said she thought my grandmother did it, because she doesn't like him having Marilu in the house.

-Your grandmother's dead, sweetie.

-Well, yea, I know that. In any case, Mrs. Cavella thinks Marilu pokes around way too much for a cleaning girl and her son is a convict or an inmate or some such thing.

-Maybe Mrs. Cavella doesn't like him having Marilu in the house.

-I don't see how that matters.

-Mmmm.

-Mmmm. He said it looked like snow out there. The bread was spread all around the whole damn house, he said. I don't think Marilu's leaving though, you know, she and Mrs. Cavella are being very cool to one another apparently. The whole thing seems a little subtle for Nana, but you just never know.

-Is that so?

-Well I don't anyway. You know, Mrs. Cavella may have a point about Nana having spread the bread. She had a great, crazy sense of things, she had a crazy sense of humor. I mean, she knew the bread thing would irk Grandfather. He had to pay the Giava's twenty-five bucks apiece...Marilu seemed pretty freaked out about it too.

-That's what you get for living near the City.

-Bread on the lawn?

-No, the lawn guys...the lawn guys can charge an arm and a leg up there.

-That's true. She sure was creative and, well, I mean, bread on the lawn is a very unusual technique.

-Mmmm. Doesn't Mrs. Cavella work at an Italian restaurant?

-Yup.

-Do you suppose they give leftovers to the employees?

-Dunno, you know. Why? You looking for a job?

-I don't think so.

Mmmm. She is crushing a pretzel in one hand, absolutely forgetting the crumbs and salt and reading him a poem she has just finished. It is all about a dead pauper she saw on the Gran Via, in Madrid.

-"...now he's more green than white the only ice tonight, in Castilla."

He is leaning back against the white wicker loveseat and rolling his head over her knees. Caressing the smooth, brown bottle top, he is opening and closing his eyes rhythmically as he rolls his neck and she reads. She is remembering that she was the only one on the Gran Via that night who seemed to see the dead man. She watched him closely then, she is seeing him now. He

is thinking that she is still very much a child and that he is a man. He is unaware that the rolling of his head is bruising her knees and that the crushed capillaries are absorbing his thoughts and that she can see them in the upturned palm of her hand. Her eyelids also flicker. They flicker and then open wide, clear.

-You think I am naive.

-No...it's a good poem, it's very good. I like it.

-Not the poem, not the poem...you think I make things up like toys or something, you know, playthings for a child.

-I never said that.

-Mmmm.

You think I am a child and you are a man.

-I never said that.

-It's okay, you can be part of my stories even if you don't believe them, it's okay. They are mostly true, you know, but that's okay.

-I don't really want to be part of your stories.

-Well, you are though. I see these things in you too. I can't help that. You are often a part of my stories.

-You sometimes act like a child. You're being silly now, I can't stand it when you get silly...just like a little girl sometimes, I swear.

-Mmmm.

Mmmm.