

Windows

by Jeff Geiger

The Kid

Thirty-two cracks. Two light poles. A few blades of grass peaking through. One-hundred and forty-seven steps on the concrete path. The sunlight reflecting on the third window of the second clothes store. A barber shop, then an office supplier, then his Mecca. The Kid has memorized his walk to the toy store over the past few months. This isn't just any toy store, it's *his* toy store. He hasn't been to any other. He doesn't know any other. For all the Kid knows, everything fun related comes from that lone brick and mortar storefront.

Every morning, he gets up a little earlier than he has to, rushes out of bed, and quickly scarfs down his meager meal of biscuits and jam. This is so that on his walks to school he can allot himself five minutes to pause outside the shop. In that short amount of time, the boy's wide, beady eyes take in all they can. Rows upon rows of toys of all make and models. Red cars and silver wind-up robots. Flashing action figures and talking dolls. Some he's seen before, some he never knew existed. The Kid puts his tattered hand-me-down books on the ground to use as a stool. Before, his eyes barely reached the bottom of the window. Now, everything above his waist is visible to customers. He presses himself against the glass, feeling the coolness of the pane on his hands, nose, and forehead. With his new vantage point he can view deeper into the Vault of All Desirable Things.

He hopes that one Christmas Day he'll find, under a spruce sapling, a box holding one these toys, even if only the smallest one. Last year he got one of his books that now gives him a peek into his dreams. The year before that, a pair of woolen gloves. Before that, his first present: a shiny penny. The Kid rubs the copper coin in his pocket between his thumb and forefinger. He imagines the coin self replicating in his hand. The pile grows, weighing down his pockets,

widening the hole until they spill out to the ground and encase his shoes like a copper castle. Then the coins start to disappear and climb back into his pockets. Little action figures, balls, game pieces, and other toys transform out of the shadow of the coins. He hopes.

A snowflake falls on a strand of his hair. It melts and the water run down his bangs and across his eyelids. The visions on the sidewalk vanish and the penny feels cold in his hands. Out of his dream trance, he remembers that he has to go. The Kid jumps from the stand of paper into a snowbank. He scopes the books back into a sack and slings it over his shoulder. The Kid rushes down the street with thoughts of the store still with him, and his oily imprint still on the window pane.

The Executive

The suit is black and pristine, tailored perfectly. It is fitted around a tall thin man. He is handsome, yet his gaunt figure is one tone too pale, with eyes just too dark and narrow, and a nose too sharp. The man stands with a much too large desk to his back with just the right size pane of glass to his front. He stares. He watches. He observes. The silver hands on his silver watch tick away the time. This is a man who has achieved. He climbed the corporate ladder, putting one nervous and sweaty hand on one rung after the other, until the hands were hard as stone and felt no passion. No one ever gave him anything. Yet he took everything from them. He is no vulture, snake, leech, parasite, or back-stabber. The man on top of the world is simply himself. His small eyes look at his kingdom. He hazes at his workers who scurry like they are filled with passion or fear—it does not matter which. The suit sucks inward with a deep breath. He takes it in.

The Doctor

The grizzled ancient walks down the dimly lit hall, his white coat and stethoscope swaying with his stride. He stops mid-step

underneath a flickering fluorescent light. Pushing aside the semi-opaque plastic divider, he observes his patient. She's a pleasant lady in her late 50's who used to be the secretary of education until her health got the better of her. The pair greet and exchange a weak smile. The doctor rubs the liver spot on the back of his left hand as he starts to her the bad news. The cancer has spread from her breast to her brain. Only a few days remain. They look into each other's eyes and see their own reflection. The eyes are filled with acceptance and sorrow. The doctor steps back and closes the partition. He looks down the hall at the remaining plastic sheet hanging stillly in the dry air. Death was a frequent visitor to these parts, as was life. Such is the duality of the old man's occupation. No one knows what lies behind the curtain until he makes his rounds. Soon, his time will come. When it does, he shall greet death like and old friend.

The Actress

The woman sits in the chair, looking at the mirror, and begins to apply her makeup. Today, a white faced geisha. Yesterday, a pretty doll face. Tomorrow, an hold hag. She was always good at lying as a little kid, but being a deceiver by trade was something else entirely. At least when she was young she was the same person. Now she doesn't know what she is. Her boyfriend Bobby doesn't know anymore either. Or was it Ricky? Each play, film, act, a different lover. A different romance, A different pair of tormented hearts. Simply, she's too good at her job. Who she should adore or who she should spite carries on after the set. It is all a farce or is it all the truth? A stream of tears run down her cheeks, ruining the makeup. Regaining composure, she looks at the mirror. It shows her a murky white emotionless face.

