

Betty & John · *Jonathan Aaron*

Betty didn't answer and continued building the bookshelf. Seeing her muscles gather beneath her skirt, which looked so thin it seemed to want to join her flesh forever, John wondered if he could be growing deaf. Betty got out an aluminum tool-box. John decided he would say no more. Betty found a heavy screwdriver and started to screw the first of many long metal struts into the walls. John remembered nothing was easy. Betty began to sweat from the effort, so she took off all her clothes. John suspected that even though he hadn't been born yesterday, he might be somebody else. Betty stopped for a moment to scratch her elbow, just as John looked out of the enormous bay window and saw lots of birds flopping around in a Victorian moonbath. Suddenly Betty reached up and touched an antler of the deer-head above the mantel. Water jetted out of the trophy's mouth and nostrils into a limestone basin revealed by a sliding panel in the floor in front of the fireplace and surrounded by a profusion of ferns and tall grass. John sensed the proximity of strange animals in underbrush that seemed to go on for miles. Betty turned, saw him as if for the first time, and moved toward him, her smile reflecting an unmistakable intention. When she kissed him John felt a cool wind blow through his body, scattering dead leaves, and bearing in a gust of rain the promise of things starting over again. Betty kissed a man she had never seen before. John knew the weightlessness peculiar to anyone about to flower into song.