

Two Camelias in a Vase · Isabel Nathaniel

The scent is everywhere, a slow weight
of sweetness. Languor at first
that hangs in the quiet of this room.
Now, soon, the sweetness is your own breath
until you can imagine the heroines
of Late Movies and Bette Davis
sends the letter to Mr. Hammond.
*I absolutely must see you,
come at eleven.* Smooth white blooming
in a crystal vase brought from England
to Singapore. Bette Davis works her lace
and waits. He's been her lover
for years. The perfume in the room
is a frenzy now. He prefers
the Asian woman who powders her face
to a mask and wears gold chains.
The camelias go too far, deep curl
of the petals, a drug of scent
like making love. Later she lies
about why she killed Mr. Hammond.
She has fired six times in all.