

Sketch

Volume 42, Number 1

1976

Article 9

Spring Cleaning

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Spring Cleaning

by

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WINNER OF

THE FOCUS POETRY AWARD, 1976

*When you were sure winter had finally receded,
you would tie a scrap of apron over your hair
and stand at the screen door hollering
at my conscience
until I'd come
out of the woodshed
where I'd hid
because I knew what you were up to
and I would claim
innocently
I hadn't heard you
though I knew you knew.
And then you would stand on a chair
and hand the curtains down
carefully
because it was the depression
And you would holler at me for poking my finger
through the lace
because it was the depression
And I would sneeze at the dustiness of them
while we toted them to the washtub
and smell the clean wetness of them
when we lugged them
dripping
heavy
to the pear tree side of the house,
me complaining because bees swarmed there
and you pulling the lace tight
over the stretcher pins
then stopping
to daub spit mud on my bee stung arm
while I asked if it were true bees die
when they sting.*

*And then we'd bare beds
 and fill sun hot lines
 with blankets and rugs
 flapping
 as you beat the dickens out of them
 and seeing your strength
 I knew I didn't want you mad at me
 and hurried in for the broom
 when you asked for it
 even though I didn't want to.*

*And then you would scour the naked windows
 with bon ami
 and polish them
 until the sun shone through
 bright
 stark
 clean
 glorifying dust motes
 resurrected
 after a year cloistered by bedsprings.*

*And then you'd scrub woodwork
 to purity
 except for the pencil marks on the kitchen doorway
 And you'd say "Stand up tall.
 Let's see how much you grew over winter."
 And you'd make a new mark
 above the others
 and I'd be proud
 because I'd grown three inches.*

*And then we'd bring blankets and rugs
 back to bed and floor
 and hang curtains
 carefully
 because it was the depression
 and the house would smell of pear trees
 and we'd be careful
 hoping it wouldn't get dirty again,
 but it always did
 and I always grew every winter.*