

Patti Scheibel

There in Front of the Window

I threw my sister's clothes out the window while she was taking a shower. Now she stands naked in front of the open window looking down at her clothes scattered across the parking lot. It's a hot bleached white day; the kind where even inhaling seems like too much work. She stands framed in the window like a picture in the museum, faded in the heat, dripping and glistening in the light, oblivious to her own exposure.

She will not move from there. She will stand there until gravity forces me to run downstairs and gather up her clothes into a big dirty bundle. I will carry it up to her and she won't say a word. She'll just look at me. She will put her clothes into the hamper because they touched the asphalt and shards of broken glass may have woven their way into the fabric. Then she will rummage through my cluttered closet for something to wear, peering at each item as though she can't bear the touch of material against her skin. She will put on the least offensive thing she can find, probably shorts and a t-shirt. After that she will hurt me in some way. I won't bother to run away or hide. She would wait for me if necessary.

I know this as a fact, the same way I know that I will continue to throw her clothes out the window for as long as we live together, barring bodily disablement. This scene will repeat itself over and over again until one of three things happen:

1) I will stop throwing her clothes out the window. Some things are addictive, after awhile you simply lose control. Watching her clothes flutter down from our second window is addictive. This is the least likely alternative.

2) She will beat me into a pulp. One day she will get lost in her

anger and she won't stop even if I scream. As long as she and her boyfriend are getting along alright, she hasn't had to work overtime and Dad hasn't called to ask if we've seen Mom lately, I don't have to worry. The odds are against me though.

3) Someday I will resist gravity and I won't run downstairs to gather up her clothes. She will stand there, window flung open, slowly hunching over as time passes and her bones become brittle. Long after her clothes have decayed in the parking lot she will still be there, gray and shriveled. Eventually she'll die, her naked body mummified in the heat there in front of the window like Stonehenge.