Fall 1979

Final Notice

Kathy Callaway

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FINAL NOTICE

For a hundred dollars, I have the only cabin
in Manhattan, on top of Victor Herbert's
former home. I leased it from a young Brunhilda.
Everything's here: piano, old letters,
Tannhauser and *The Ring Cycle* damp in a corner.
She left tracts on Rudolph Steiner,
went to live with her voice coach
three blocks down. Smokestacks rear up,
fat horses; for the first time in years
I can hear rain.

The Dakota is across the street
where Rosemary had her writhing baby.
Little monsters cry on the corners;
a boy in a velvet jacket
drops rocks on spooked pedestrians.
Central Park from here looks innocent,
though I've seen things—
silk pants bloodied under dogwood
from the heads of Haitian chickens
(the pink riding up like litmus)—

The heirs of Victor Herbert
are forgetting us. Here's a notice
the power's going, taped
in the wheezing gold cage that cranks me up here.
There's only me, anyway, and Frank, retired
from the liquor store on Amsterdam.
He prowls the worn hall carpet barefoot,
suspenders on his hips like handles,
leaving me oranges and yesterday some
thrown-out radio he'd tinkered with.
The city put him here, he told me.
They'd put me anywhere.

Today when I came home
I found his blood all the way to the elevator—
the city moving in on remainders,
the way you'd know bad ships
by their helpless timber.