Fall 1982

Carefully

LuAnn Keener

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LuAnn Keener

CAREFULLY

Behind the door of an afternoon I sometimes sense someone waiting. Not the dead in their collapsing houses, not the ghost who has never left the room where one evening his veins turned to violin strings. Not the past that bunches round my limbs like yellowed cloth in the room where I lived my girlhood, in the house where my grandmother died, where my mother spends her days emptying boxes of her father's shoes, her mother's gloves, into other boxes.

Not these, but a shade of the future. Like a child who keeps walking back to the place where other children spat at him and his mother laughed. He watches from hedges, from the smogged windows of gables. I think he is waiting to judge me. Perhaps if I spread the cloth over the table with a certain gentleness, he will be comforted. Then I can coax him in, put him to sleep in a bed I have made ready. And begin a strange motherhood, where all that could undo me breathes softly in the next room.