

Vona Groarke

SPINDRIFT



Gallery Books

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spindrift, n. spray blown from the crests of waves by the wind
— *Oxford Dictionary of English*

By and By

Noon
shoulders
its way
through heat
like a horseman
in uniform
on a country lane
who calls
'Stay there'
to a yellow girl
lagging
some short
way behind.

Oh, my lost
father, stay;
there's a catch
of shadow
at your back
and this hour
will stand
to either
side of us,
like painted
gateposts.

Here's all
the life
I would
set out for us:
a future left
like the note
on a yellow
kitchen table
reminding you

to call
for me
on the
way home.

The Family Room

The sea loses memory
in midland shallows.
So much of what it has to say
is the sound of a small boy
in a navy jacket
running over stones,

then hunkering
under triple windows
that empty into evergreens
and seaweed drapes.

There is a shimmer
of newspaper clippings
and a red pen
that knows everything
but still needs to be told.

From here on in
light will be noiseless,
chastened, as if
holding its breath.
Ask any question
of a bolt of smoke;
the scissors will answer
'Indeed, indeed'.

The Clutch Handbag

Black bombazine with grosgrain binding,
a clasp of diamanté butterflies and a row
of bevelled ivory sequins threaded with slipknots.

Finesse. A lipstick of a certain red,
a bronze compact, the cachet
of an embossed cigarette case.

Emerald lining that is like glossy music
from a dance-hall band or the sheen
of sable eyes on the mink stole

whose snout rounds on the very shape
of a tear in the satin no bigger than
her incarnadine thumbnail

through which five decades
have slipped like small coins
skittering the opening notes

of a foxtrot or an old-time waltz
that nobody, but nobody,
recalls.

Aubade

You say that you heard piano chords rustling in the night;
that you woke once and saw me there, and again.
Then I was gone. The sea under your bed said something
like your name: you thought you'd drown.

This morning your fever slinks away
like a dog bested by the hubbub of city-fed
and workaday birdsong come into its own.
You call. You want some toast.

The trees are bone dry; sunlight hunkers behind them.
Your hair fronds when I lift your head
as if out of a sea pulling away. I offer you
the lidded cup. You take it and you drink.

Let the worst I ever do to you be die.
Turn your head sideways, dear, so I can watch you sleep.
Let the morning have us, and the afternoon.
I am here, blessed, capable of more.

Pastoral

I've ruined it.
Thirty, forty years from now,
she'll hear it again
and it won't be just
a clarinet cuckoo
in a thicket of strings
but her long-dead mother
in an apron with French cheeses on it,
turning from the sink to say,
'Listen, here it comes'.

*

The streetlamp
of my laptop flicks back on
and the automatic light upstairs
flutters two goldfish
that are the only living things
inside these walls,
not counting me.

*

Lilac buds
on his black sleeve
is how his pollen
requires me
to become
a clear night sky
in which new stars,
thousands of them,
are called upon
to bloom.