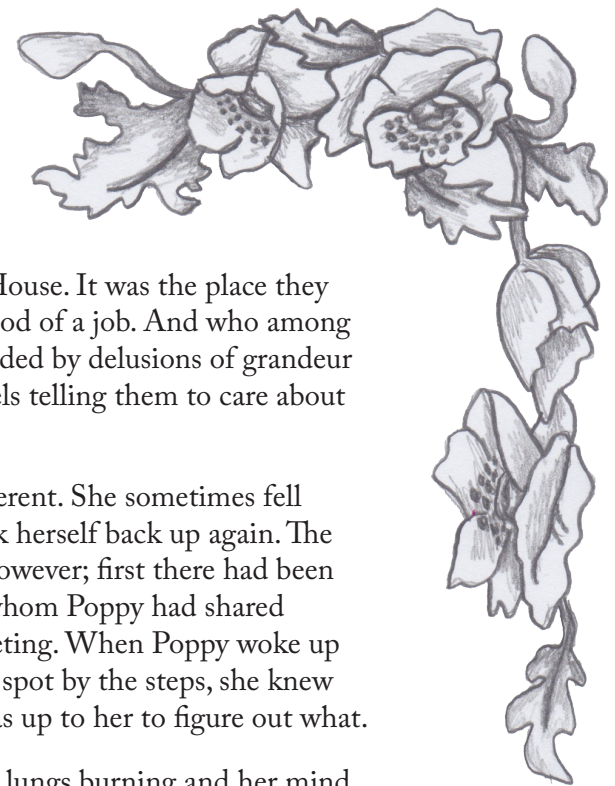


GLASS HOUSE



It wasn't uncommon for people to disappear from Glass House. It was the place they went to lose themselves, and sometimes people did too good of a job. And who among that house's inhabitants would notice, with their eyes clouded by delusions of grandeur and false visions, and their racing hearts and swollen vessels telling them to care about other, more pressing things?

Red-headed, blue-eyed Poppy Reed assumed she was different. She sometimes fell to the power of the House, but she was always able to pick herself back up again. The disappearances around her were starting to concern her, however; first there had been Sammy, and then Lisa, and most recently Heather, with whom Poppy had shared somewhat of an affinity due to their mutual love of crocheting. When Poppy woke up one morning to find Heather no longer lying in her usual spot by the steps, she knew immediately that something had happened, and that it was up to her to figure out what.

Following a brief trip to the smoky basement that left her lungs burning and her mind buzzing, she decided to ask questions of the others in the House. After the second person had muttered a response and shuffled away, refusing to acknowledge her, Poppy began to suspect that whatever was going on in Glass House was much bigger than she had originally imagined.

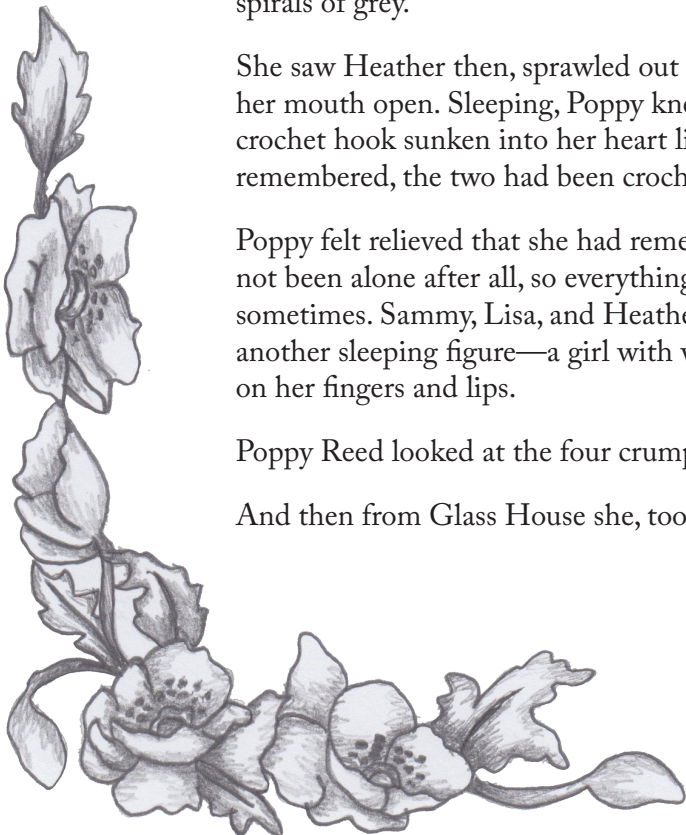
Suddenly, everyone around her seemed untrustworthy. Eyes stared at her from dark corners; teeth were bared as she passed. The walls around her seemed to echo, to listen. Poppy returned to the basement, seeking refuge, the smoke hugging her protectively as a cloak and the popping sounds from the bowl at her lips soothing her ringing ears. Here, the glass took on a warm, comforting glow. She breathed in, held it, and breathed out the spirals of grey.

She saw Heather then, sprawled out by the water heater, her head fallen to one side and her mouth open. Sleeping, Poppy knew. She liked to sleep there sometimes, with her crochet hook sunken into her heart like that. In fact, just the other day, Poppy suddenly remembered, the two had been crocheting and Heather had begged her to put it there.

Poppy felt relieved that she had remembered where Heather was. And Heather had not been alone after all, so everything was fine. Sammy and Lisa liked to sleep here too, sometimes. Sammy, Lisa, and Heather, all dipped in red and in a row, and beside them another sleeping figure—a girl with wide, glassy blue eyes, red hair, and remnants of glass on her fingers and lips.

Poppy Reed looked at the four crumpled figures below her and smiled.

And then from Glass House she, too, disappeared.



—Alma Miller
Third Place Winner
Broadside "Glass" Flash Fiction Contest


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