
KNOWING WITHIN KNOWING

BY BETH GOOBIE

the house is yellow brick, on the steep promise of a hill
that rises toward the neighborhood elementary school.
half a block further, tennis racquets banter casually
under a hilltop cathedral, its stone spires and black crosses
thrust into the gut of god, claiming sky.
closer to the ground, a yellow house murmurs
window prayers of geraniums and white petunias
as a twelve-year-old girl climbs its three front steps,
then pauses on a square porch
with a peeling apologetic railing -
the last touch of this world granted to her
before she knocks twice and the front door opens
onto a woman wearing an apron with upside-down tulips
falling toward the bottom left hem.

the woman could be any neighborhood mother,
her hair erupting into the same pink sponge-curler waves
that assault the heads of most women on this street,
but before her the girl feels the various wheels and gears
of her body settle into a pigeon-grey stillness,
her brain abruptly in limbo, as if waiting
for an unknown key to unlock her next series of moves.

pursed into a keyhole, the woman's chicken-blood lips
release the first code: you are collecting for the united way?
to which the girl clicks in with this week's response:
i am selling chocolate bars for a school history trip to ottawa.
ah, says the woman, i would like one of those chocolate bars.
come in while i get my purse, suddenly

her wicked-witch-of-the-west left index finger darts out
and draws a counter-clockwise circle around the girl's face,
sucking her into a massive black spin inside her head,
a kansas tornado that explodes out of some
back-behind section of her brain and whirls her
like a story like a dream like a lost thought of herself
out of her body, up above the door lintel
where she hovers, spinning in nothing-nowhere darkness
while a motionless twelve-year-old girl stands below,
eyelids fluttering with the static that buzzes
between radio stations, waiting to be tuned in.

the woman speaks again, her voice now guttural,
digging deep into her throat: awake, o chosen one,
the brethren await - words of an foreign tongue,
a language unfamiliar to the girl spinning in the kansas tornado
above the door lintel but no matter, in the hall below
a different girl is waking into the twelve-year-old body -
a girl with the same hairstyle, same matching sweater-set
and argyle socks, a girl who wouldn't recognize
the one who walked up to this yellow brick house
if she saw her in a mirror. now the woman speaks a third time
in her deep grave-digging voice: identify yourself,
these words as mundane to the newly-woken girl
as her hopes being lined up, one by one,
for execution against a wall.

corporal black door, third division, twenty-first star,
she replies in german-spoken-backward;
she is a wind-up walkie-talkie 007 barbie doll
walking thirteen steps backward
along a sky-blue hall into a sky-blue room
where children sit in a semi-circle facing a man
in a uniform and a thin combed-straight mustache.
heil hitler! snaps the man in reverse-german
and the girl drives up her left hand
like a high-voltage jolt of electric shock.
relih lieh! she shouts back, it is the cry of the chosen,
those who carry holy blood, the secret elite
who live among the defiled until the lord of light returns
and calls his children to rule. seated among her own kind,

the girl faces the red flag with the white-circled swastika
draped across the front of the room. in this holy place,
the faithful come to learn their sacred heritage:
the great fuhrer, his crusaders the s.s.,
and all those who preceded them - the chosen
who have carried the word like a second tongue,
hidden and serpentine, from the beginning of time,
passing it on only to those born into the knowing
within knowing. for the chosen it is all word
within word, what lies on the other side of meaning,
and in this isis-blue room, words spoken backward
teach the girl about her lineage, bloodlines
that connect her to presidents and kings,
the secret chronology that guides all history toward
a single final apocalypse, and the rule of the holy ones
descended from the great planet mars
to crossbreed with mortal man. seated among the chosen

children in this room, the girl learns that everything she does
has a double purpose, she is a story told twice,
backward and forward in many tongues
and she must learn them all - the secret hierarchies and codes,
the holy places hidden within the churches, stores, schools
and storybook houses of her town. in this isis-blue room,
the girl studies the blueprints of government buildings,
memorizes labyrinths, mazes and the diagrams
of small engines, and learns to repair faulty guns.
lesson's end brings the sacred chant before the flag,
the ritual dance of the spinning cross, and the game
in which each child tries to beat a stopwatch
while placing tiny objects behind the appropriate door
in a plastic multicolored grid. now you have put today's
memories away inside your head, says the man
with the combed-straight mustache, his words causing

deep sleepiness to lap at the inside of the girl's head;
suddenly she can remember nothing, stares vacantly
at a man with a funny mustache, who is he,
she has never seen him before, blink and he is gone,
she is walking backward along a sky-blue hall
and standing beneath a yellow door lintel
while a woman with chicken-blood lips
draws a clockwise circle in front of her face
and now the kansas tornado drops from the door lintel,
whirling the first girl back into her twelve-year-old body
where she stands, hand outstretched to receive a two-dollar bill
while a blond woman with kaleidoscopic hair says,
thank you for the chocolate bar.

money in hand, the girl steps out of the yellow house
onto the small square porch with the apologetic railing.
she has been here before, listening to the smug banter
of tennis racquets below the cathedral,
she is sure of this; for a moment the knowing
is as clear-edged and brilliant as a butterfly
trapped in a glass paperweight

but now she is taking three steps down
and leaving the knowing behind
as the thick scent of september grass ascends to meet her
and a wild choir of autumn leaves rushes past her face
in all the notes she has not yet learned to sing.

Note: Beth Goobie was born into an intergenerational CIA-connected cult that continues to operate in central Ontario. This poem describes a typical programming session received as a child in a house near her "home." Many programming codes appear in the poem: flower codes (geraniums meant blood and sacrifice, tulips were also significant); upside-down versus right side up; two knocks meant "open," a word with two syllables; counter-clockwise circles were used to open programs and clockwise circles were used to close them; Wizard of Oz programming, used to displace an alter out of the body into a different dimension; backward versus forward programming, both in movement and speaking; voice tone changes, used to switch personalities; the color sky blue representing Isis; grids as a memory/personality storage program; ordinary phrases being spoken in specific sequences to trigger a switch of alters.