

INVENTORY

A fawning season, a string of mosquito bites, a dark water. Elsewhere the view is another, something quite different is taking place; there children are not growing up to become complacent. Still, outside the summer cottage, quackgrass and meadow foxtail have thrived and flourished. They are now standing tall, and what once was a lawn has become a meadow. Timothy and downy oat-grass. Silky and slender they bend with the wind.

At seven o'clock the wall of trees shuts the evening sun out.

Summer is narrow. Something didn't turn out the way you planned and white-knuckled you reconcile with the circumstances. Your mother looks older than before. She is. Your parents are still blocking the view of the abyss, and you are grateful that you don't have to see the hill slope downwards. You remind yourself that it is truly something to be grateful for.

At the local pub, also a pizzeria, today's beer is served in the vapours of the spilled beer of yesterday, and of what was spilled the day before yesterday and of what was spilled last year. In the bathroom posters announce performed concerts and past book circles. The heat sits very tight.

A summer in the country and you see your children's childhood take the shape of other children's childhoods. They guzzle soda, line up scrapes, fight, make peace and then pick the legs off daddy-longlegs until you catch them in the act and tears and assurances follow. They get to drift freely. They will learn, if not now so when the day comes that they get rejected for gracelessness and barbarism. It is a problem for the future, however. You have performed. This is what you are capable of. And you have reproduced. Your parents get to see their genes skip into the unclear future – a future nonetheless.

Inside the house, dead people's belongings have heaped up and turned into exotic decorations on your own existence. Of course there is a shoebox with old photographs.

Strangers related to you by blood now belong to the story of you, not to the story of themselves. No one who is alive knows the names they bore. Some of them have your nose. One greyscaled face is fresh as dew in one photo, leaf through and find it broad and heavy in another. Today you know how that came to be. It's just to shift your eyes from one picture to another. What you inherited from your mother. What she inherited from hers.

None of it has any true value. Not even a sentimental one. You clear away everything you don't know the price of. It is legitimate to burn that which is combustible, to recycle glass, plastic and metal. In the end, a life is the sum of its possessions. In the same way you will be the sum of yours and I of mine. Pan across the places you have lived, all the things that kept you fastened to this world. Now you and I are as old as we are. Still, because we are living and the dead are not, we are superior to them, and they are losers.

To your children the world is still transparent and mobile. As the years go by, it will become more unyielding. From the stairs you watch them sweep through the grass, blue-eyed and ignorant, not at all concerned about their economic conditions.

The grass reaches well up to the waist and spikes leave dark footprints on your clothes. This grass no lawnmower will subdue, it has to be cut. Leave it be and go back inside.

When your future non-existent ghost passes through the rooms you have inhabited, one after another, a dry, impersonal wind, the rents and mortgages will be the burden of an unknown, yet unborn, individual. In another country people yet unborn will wake up in the morning to die later in the day. And your name will not be a sigh on the breath of a long dead lover, but a series of dispersed objects and four words on the list of those who have lived and then stopped doing so. Then that will be what is. To this you have nothing to object; to you, it is reassuring.

Lisa Him-Jensen, August 2014