

Night Flowers

Stephen Nichols

CATHY LIES in the throat of the night as the wolf's yellow headlights appear in the window. She listens for his footsteps on the gravel driveway, followed by the turn of the key in the lock. She kisses the crucifix her mother gave her then crosses her legs.

It is the summer solstice and her lips are thick and wet—swollen tuberoses bloom pollinate the air. Their long waxy trumpets play discordant notes that twitch in the dreams of her sleeping lambs.

Outside her window, the trees are full of ripe figs—possums gorge, close their eyes, and lick their sticky fingers. Cathy tries to disappear under a white sheet.

Downstairs, in the corner of the living room, he burns a cigarette between stained teeth. His eyes—bloodshot, embryonic sacs—do not blink. His nostrils flare as he unfastens his belt and ascends the stairs.