

Inventory for Some Kind of Fairy Tale
By Noel Thistle Tague

Solstice

Late June. Green rains. The gardens hum. Who would die when the days are so long? Yet my grandmother lies in a hospital room drifting toward death on dark waters.

Moon

My grandmother will die, but not before my cousin, who is at this moment pushing cash across the counter at a Motel 6 in Manchester. Whose body sings for what her man scored. Together they will descend into an enchanted sleep and no one will slash through thorns or knock down doors to lift them out of it. Hours will pass over the room, hours in which no one thinks of her. First shadow, then night. Her white-blond hair pooling upon the bedspread, a green moon.

Fruit

On a scan, a brain bleed looks like rot in the flesh of a melon. A blot, a blight. An overdose looks like what's left after a storm has swept through, the storm churning at the center of the self. Debris of bones and bodies. Sodden clothing and spoiled food. Homes tilting off foundations, doors ripped from hinges, windows black.

Song

I sing a song in my head, which is my cousin's name, over and over until it becomes a spell: *Melody Autumn, Melody Autumn, Melody Autumn. Melody, Autumn. Melody. Autumn.* Until it spellbinds some trace to the present. In a certain type of story, a girl can have less than nothing, but if she has a name like that, it will save her.

Marriage

My grandparents go out for their first ice cream cone of the season. It is their seventieth year of marriage. My grandmother's long, arthritic fingers wrap around a napkin wrapped around a maple walnut cone. A fretwork of veins rippling across the back of her hand and vanishing into the dark crescent at her sleeve. She liked chocolate jimmies, liked saying the word, *jimmies*. Returning home, she trips getting out of the car, falls and hits her head, and this is where the

drive becomes a folly, the ice cream cone a colon announcing
the end of the story:

Meanwhile

Azaleas and rhododendrons bloom into wedding cakes.
Lupines already a memory, forsythia gone green. Peonies
called Sarah Bernhardt and Shirley Temple, Raspberry
Sundae and Bowl of Cream, decaying like prima donnas.
False indigo shivering on the breeze. Yarrow in magenta and
yellow, astral clusters on hairy stems. Foxglove with all its
freckled poison mouths. Poppies the color of rosé,
champagne, Cointreau in a sunlit glass, so fragile I cut them
early in the morning, before the wind can tear them apart.