

*Lisa Russ Spaar*

## **The Sound of Music**

April, pleached nerve-ends,  
tangles firing, expiring

in demented light, swallows, my mother's  
pansy face, blankly sly,

as God hums, distracted at the yard's edge.

I'm inside with her, before the TV's flicker, dirndls,  
alpine backdrop, staircase,

& the trompe l'oeil notion of a woman  
teaching children to sing.

Wet rosemary pliosion of the tine-burst, roasting lamb.

Easter 1965, the Madison Theater, Detroit:  
herding us kids in beneath the light-bulbed

anvil marquee, smart in pumps & sunglasses,  
out of the burned lament

of her streets, cigarettes, anger jammed, secret in her shoes.

Double-dutching blue shadows, I pray now  
to know where is the soul,

rhododendron & Russian olive. Is it in her stare  
on the wall, untouchable voice warbling

hands fluttering, as though conducting a choir, practicing  
scales,

*Soon her mama with a gleaming gloat heard,*  
*yodeling* along with the white-haired crone-goat puppet

pushing her girl across the stage toward a yokel goat-herd  
held up by strings, *Layee odl, layee odl layee-oooh—*

or in the purl & flux of sky without, gruffly clearing its throat?

## Good Friday, Looking Inward

Conversion. Why locate it  
in the mind? After shared crusts,

legumes in black broth, sharp salad,  
chaste at vitrine café window,

noon turned biblical, leaden scrim  
uncanny as cars arterial & veinal

coursed the roadside. *In new*  
& *old ways*, you said in the parking lot

of our long love, & if there is a place  
one story invades another,

shuts, opens it, we were there,  
damage & repair, your arms already

full of release, showing me how.  
Sulphur singe, plashed asphalt,

a file of still locked-down cherries  
alongside ghost-lushing my pelvis

as you witnessed, waiting  
not for the world to recall us.

No. No way either to take  
or turn back wounded pages.

I saw. But first, as at every first,  
I was blind.

## To the Memory of My Mother

Heat eats the pond dry.  
Dementia is one reply to wonder.

What part of her (me)  
knows me (her)?

Pulpit self, you are experiment.  
A puddle's cataract.

*Would you like to use the port-a-potty?*  
I ask. Nothing. Then, "I'll make that into jam."

She, young, whipping yard-sticks.  
Cracking an ice-cube tray over my head.

Some who believe they are absolved  
are not. None of this matters.

A piano can be hauled  
through the upstairs window

of a house whose doors  
& stairwells are too squirrely & small.

What is pardoned as the lid lifts  
at the last. The shed dread?