

from *The Undying Present*

There are four people on stage but it is not a stage. They are inside a room standing in front of a wall painted like a forest.

A woman is dancing. She wears a tight silver bodice. Another woman stands against the wall with dark frizzy hair. She wears red. Two men are kissing in the center of the stage. One has a dark moustache and the other is blonde and smooth and looks very young.

Something happens to the dancing woman. She writhes on the ground. Was she shot? But the gun has not appeared yet. The two men are looking at each other and sometimes they kiss passionately, while the women—the one in silver writhing and the one in red holding her—are dancing horizontally on a bare floor.

We are in the third room. We are not watching television. We are sitting in a theater, you and I. We sit in the middle of the center aisle. Others are scattered around checking their phones in the dark to see what time it is. How did we get here? We sit facing forward. You reach over to hold my hand. Our hands touch for several minutes. Our bodies do not move very much at all. After a while one of us pulls our hand away from the other and we both change the positions of our arms and legs.

The color of the wall is red. Blood is another color. The blood against the wall, the blood all over her yellow dress, it creeps downward. The blood streaming down the wall forms a tiny puddle at the crevice where the wall meets the floor. Blood drips off the stage.

My dress looks like a silk nightgown. It is clean and new. It travels the length of my body hanging just above the polished floor. I walk elegantly in my heels down the large marble stairs, my red painted fingers caressing the handrail. I am greeting someone who has just been let in through the glass doors. "Hello."

A skinny man with a dark moustache and a hairy chest is naked except for a small piece of fabric wrapped around his genital area. He has been led onto the stage by hand. Others walk off to the sides. He dances in front of the camera. Some kind of music plays. He waves his arms in the air fluidly and moves his hips back and forth. He is smiling.

Suddenly a woman runs into the frame with a look of distress. The scene has changed but we hardly notice. She moves her head around in all directions frantically (fearfully?) Her hands tremble near her face. Another woman is standing against the wall wrapped in silky reds. Her hair is wild. She looks like a sorceress. She has powers. She points to different areas on stage and the woman runs from point to point, looks back then looks forward, hands trembling by her face. She runs into the wall then back again and so on. Painted on the wall a yellow line runs sharply up to a point and then slants down gradually. The sorceress leans against the wall at the peak. The trembling woman stands at the edge, where the line slants down, frozen in a pose.

Something is missing. You reach for my hand. I am looking for the cue mark.