

FAYE D. FRITH

HANDCROOKEDPRINTEDWAS

CLOSED TODAY

DEATH IN FAMILY

ohhhh — to myself & I

did want  
a newspaper but I could  
walk the halfblock to the corner stand for  
Saturday's with the  
ads & extras

wonder who it is — is there a mother? could be anyone —  
sisterchildauntuncle? grandparent?

first there was a weedlot coupleofrees bushes haphazard  
fence but they dug holes for apartment tops  
two buildings for seniors with a blank on the SW corner of one &  
some said there would be a TuckShop & then

Europeans the first lot — shelving & stacking & finally  
cashing up behind the counter as if they'd had the blank before  
& sent it on ahead to establish a foothold &

this second lot were East Indians I supposed for they looked & spoke  
like but I didn't ever ask nor did they say — just were there one day as if  
they knew about blanks & footholds

nothing much changed — except the darkhaired European woman & man  
behind the counter left & a largelarge greyhaired man with a largelarge  
darkhaired spitting image & a darkhaired young whippet of a son (all with  
East Indian features & that rippling East Indian accent) came  
overonenight

father & the spitting truly large scarcely fit behind the counter image  
were friendlyfriendlyfriendly moving with a slow grace men &  
it was pleasing to walk into the kindsmile of one or the other of them  
behind the cashregister gum&treats postednotices & WintarioProvincial  
Lottario counter behind & atop the sliding glass panels over the frozen  
treasures & one or the other watching the other or talking with the regulars  
or not & I never bought much more than the paper Wednesday & Saturday &  
Good Luck On Thursdays

"Good Luck! madam" father would say "Good Luck!" when that's all I had &  
we'd laugh some with each other or "See madam! Oh that 's good  
madam" if there was \$2 or \$5 or an Free Ticket — & if I hadn't checked last  
week's numbers the official number sheet would be hauled out from the  
bottom of its candy or gum box kept for just that purpose on a small shelf  
high behind & to his left of the counter — & then one day when I hadn't had  
any luck for quite a spell except for laughs & Good Luck on Thursday  
eyes looking hopskip cautiousserious in mine

"I'll pray to Allah for you madam. I'll pray to Allah!"

& ohh!

(those crazies in my little head & I wanted to ask  
"So you know about the Goddess? all the great  
Goddesses? & some/many came from quite near to where

you used to be? (but I didn't know that exactly so I'd need to add I think  
& I wonder if maybe they've been introduced to Allah —  
I can give you names —  
Athena Aphrodite Venus Dyktyinna Artemis Diana,  
Persephone Proserpina Hera Juno Bellona Hecate Almighty Isis  
Mother Demeter Mother Ceres Mother of Wheat Mother of Deities  
Mistress of the Living Mistress of the Dead<sup>1</sup> so manymany others  
& of course they must know all about those other  
usurpers too and probably think oh fuddleduddle (but I  
didn't say that to

eyes looking hopskip cautiousserious in mine & ohh!  
like Xmas in the trenches  
no shots fired on the Golden Temple  
no massacres on the road to Mecca  
no apartheid  
no incest  
no rape  
no burning of witches

eyes riding  
eyes riding through  
eyes riding through to

beloved  
beloved to

beloved to this whitefaced auburnhaired greyeyed customer who spoke  
Canadian English with no other accent who said nothing & ohh!  
he'd come so far for me for  
one who risked only  
\$2  
& finally said  
eyes riding through

"Thank you"

Wednesday spitting rumples sad image was there behind the counter &  
I said, "I'm sorry for the trouble in you family — your mother —

"father —

"I'm so sorry —

his father —  
to come so far for me & ohh —  
who is there now who dares  
who'll pray  
who'll intercede for strangers

by now I'm sure he's met them all &  
sometimes on Thursdays  
before \$2 luck is named for tickets I no longer buy  
sometimes at shapeshift twilight  
feltshift between the day & night  
I listen  
"Good Luck! madam!"  
"I'll pray to Allah for you madam. I'll pray to Allah!"  
& think of Mistresses  
of gentle Goddesses

<sup>1</sup>Merlin Stone, *Ancient Mirrors of Womanhood* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1984) pp. 282-283.