

FOUR POEMS



Vona Groarke

HALF-RINGS

It begins with lovers
on the verge of an event.
Half-rings and promises;
the hero and the maid
whose lives are not destined
for the common run.

In the sweetest song,
he vanishes, returning
after sixteen years
to tell of press-gangs
and a foreign war.
She is married to another,

they are lost.
He does not grieve,
but mournfully besets
her world with fire.
She, in her turn,
takes his life

and makes of it
a token to remind her
that the story is an old one,
the rings not meant for use.

THE IMAGE OF THE HOUSE

The exact measure of it is a square-cut house
whose sealed approaches and steel-glazed panes
brook no disturbance in an accomplished scene.

Or a roof pitched past the picture-frame
as squat garden walls indicate a meeting point
somewhere between the rear and god-knows-where.

Infinity suggested by a white plastered wall
that leads the eye beyond attendant trees
to intimate the sky—a world elsewhere.

Without. Where I stand with my small son
face-on to the closed front door which all-the-while
receives us, takes us in. When he lifts his fist

against it, it may be to announce that we are here,
or failing that, to adjust the one flaw in the replete glass
which is his hand, which is our presence, us.

FOLDEROL

I have been walking by the harbour
where I see it is recently sprayed
that Fred loves Freda, and Freda cops Fred.
Which reminds me of you, and the twenty-four

words for “nonsense” I wrote on your thighs and back
(the night you returned from her house with some cock-
and-bull story of missed connections and loose ends)
with passion-fruit lipstick and mascara pens.

Including, for the record: blather, drivel, trash,
prattle, palaver, waffle, balderdash, gibberish, shit.
Thinking I had made a point of sorts, but not
so sure when I woke up to find my own flesh

covered with your smudged disgrace
while you, of course, had vanished without trace.

HOUSE CONTENTS

In the disco of a small hotel,
boxes are numbered and packed
according to the condition
of their random artefacts.

Wedding gifts from the thirties,
souvenirs from children's trips,
a gilt-framed oil, an inlaid chair,
cut glass and china, chipped.

Objects without purpose,
details adrift from plot:
the piano and piano stool
for sale in separate lots.