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Girl in Dressing Gown

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Girl in Dressing Gown

after Irving Guyer's WPA Print

by Matthew Brennan



Photo courtesy wpamurals.com

Behind the girl in the dressing gown, the sun is going down. Across the room, a dress outspreads against the door, the way it did in the downtown shop where, blue and luminous, it hung untouched by human hands, until she tried it on.

The girl's hands are crumpling, gently, a small piece of paper—an emblem of her heart, squeezed like a sponge flush with sorrow, but one that can spring back if she wrings it dry. It's a birthday note

whose words she'd yearned for and has read again to test their worth. She's holding back the tears; shoulders hunched, eyes open but glazed, she stares into a murky space somewhere out of focus, the habitation of her past, which just won't move away:

it's where her father's lived since she was eight when after lunch and a late matinée he drove her home, too drunk to keep the wheel straight, swerving side to side, the Packard steered

by his wobbly knees and her wide-eyed, fine-boned help. The next two times he stood her up. Sitting again in her ruined glory, the girl in the dressing gown keeps her curved back to the window and averts the light so bright

with promise that it places her face into a folded page of the old, familiar shadows until she also disappears.

