

Lemon Drops

When I see Fargo with child mind,
there are no images except
the buttery, golden-amber
glow of the door lamp at our stoop,
shining warmth against the gloaming

"in the gloaming, oh my darling"

the North Dakota winter dusk.

Memory, though, retains places-
a neighborhood variety store
two short blocks away by foot
or by sled on which Mother pulled
me when she trudged a shovel-wide
path between mile high snowdrifts-
or so they seemed-the aftermath
of yet another huge blizzard.

On the way home my arms and legs
wrapped round the one grocery bag
to steady it

"she'll be comin' round the mountain"

There was also a 13th Street
bus which would stop at 3rd Avenue
that I, as yet pre-pubescent,
was allowed to take and run home
to the golden-amber shelter.
Seated at the table, Mother
was always darning socks, mending
seams, my little sister asleep,
Daddy away on business.
He would come by night plane from far-
away places

"far away places with strange sounding names"

where I had not

ever been: Minneapolis,
Chicago and Kansas City.
He always brought a treat for us:
lemon drops tart but sweet but tart.
Even if already in bed
I'd rush out to greet him and take

their lemony sting in my mouth.

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In the faraway Chicago
a little girl, Suzanne Degnan,
was murdered, her body parts
found in a trunk, valise, or suitcase-
dismembered remnants. It was all
over the news--a little girl--
my age--for weeks I would not walk
to school. Mother had to drive me.
Inside the house, I would be safe.

"I hear their gentle voices calling"

Beyond the comforting circle,
of the golden-amber light—terrifying danger.

By age seventeen I couldn't
wait to get the hell out of there!

Karen Klein