

The Awakening

William Turber

There was silence on the outside; but on the inside, dreams and images swirled and reeled and sometimes hung in shimmering scarves about the sleeper in sweet subconsciousness.

On the outside, the snow floated like powered down on the comparatively heavy air. The street lights made it glisten with an ethereal sparkle—something appropriate to the tinsel of the season. And the ice on the limbs of the trees shone like Christmas garlands gazed on in a haze. The winter was deadly cold, but still and beautiful.

On the inside, the boy lay on the long tongue of the sofa-bed in covered comfort. The armrests were outstretched on either side in an attempt to encircle him and shield him from the cold of the outside.

He was sleeping in a room that opened directly into the living room, and the lights were out so he might continue to sleep a while longer—all lights save the quiet glow of the Christmas tree. In its electric shadow, two men sat in strained, upright positions. They were uncomfortable and businesslike—it was a bad business that brought them here tonight. There was a pitiful woman sitting with them; the Christmas tree made her feel lonely as she talked of arrangements with one of the men and spoke of God with the other. Her sob-shaken voice partially aroused the boy and he smelled the pleasant morning smell of coffee. The air vibrated strangely as he stirred.

The mourning woman was aware of him with the vagueness and clarities of a dream. She arose and drifted to him in his bed without actually knowing it; she was struggling with her motherhood and gave in to the complexity—the best way was to be simply direct.

The day was so long and it was not yet dawn. She took in a deep breath, steadied herself like a sharpshooter and aimed a kiss at the semi-conscious forehead of the boy. Her breath was as hot and wet as melting wax.

“Father has died,” she lamented, almost to herself (she did not choose her words). The boy turned over face down into the incredibly deep pillow and it became wet.

