

Daisy Summerfield's Art

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To David

1989

Women in their late forties are beautiful. Daisy Summerfield's beauty came from carving wood and stone.

She was sitting in the office of the president of the Kodaly Gallery. Alan Kodaly was saying, "I think you should do it."

"Why did he choose me?"

"He likes your work. Here's his photo. Let me know what you decide."

He brought their meeting to a close.

"He's cute," she said, as he helped her on with her coat.

At the end of the street across Fifth Avenue was the Metropolitan Museum. Her apartment was farther west at 86th and Broadway.

She decided to look in the windows of James Rose Antique China, and walked over to Madison.

Out came a short man wearing a fur coat.

"You must be insane," she said, and flung the door away from him and went in.

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The man was John Lorimer. She had his picture in her pocket.

The Roses were at the rear of the shop.

Slowly she moved back to hear what they were saying.

“I’m sorry, we’re closed. We have an emergency,” Mrs. Rose said, walking her to the door.

Daisy stood outside pretending to look at a modern pot in the uptown window.

Two men came to the door.

“They’re closed,” she said as the buzzer sounded and they went in.

“DAISY!”

Daphne Kodaly looked down Madison, made a judgment, and ran across.

“Alan said you just left.”

“I wanted to look at china.”

“They were robbed!”

•

As Daisy walked up Madison in the early winter twilight she kept touching her side to feel her wallet safe in her inner pocket.

The Elers Cup

“The work itself—what is it? Something for a museum or rich people to own.

“If you saw it on the street, would you recognize it?

“What matters is that it’s made right,” she had told a class at Parsons earlier that week.

A young woman got very red in the face. “I think art is inspirational.”

“It is altogether fitting and proper that you should,” Daisy said.

“But in a larger sense, we can not dedicate, we can not consecrate, we cannot hallow this ground. The brave men and women, living and dead, who struggled here have consecrated it far above our poor power to add or detract.’

“Not just Abstract Expressionism. Portraits. Who is this person? What is a person?”

Deathly tired, she had walked to the subway just as the high schools let out.

At 50th Street the teens in her car exited and had a gunfight on the platform.

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An old woman rolled right under the bench Daisy was sitting on.

Everyone else hit the floor.

Daisy, last and least dramatic, knelt.

Then they had to avoid stepping on shell casings and get uptown some other way.

•

Daisy's antique sculpture stands stood against the wall, the bench screws removed.

The bench screws with her chisels, rasps, and mallets, wiped and brushed clean, were locked up in her tool chest.

She didn't work if she didn't have a problem to solve, but one problem could create fifty solutions.

That was how she had carved the large body of work called Witnesses.

Her phone rang. Alan told her, "Turn on channel four."

She saw a reporter in front of James Rose Antique China.

The Elers Cup

“. . . one of the first teacups made in England. How it came to our shores and where it has been for over three hundred years are questions we may never answer.”

Daisy believed that smooth hard objects photographed their surroundings.

She had called her sculptures Witnesses because they watched and recorded her struggles.

In *The Soul of Things*, William Denton said psychics could see the scenes imprinted on objects.

“Did Daphne tell you my idea for a show?”

“Yes!”

“I thought of a title—Everyday China.”

“Sounds good.”

“So far, the pickle dish is the only shape that interests me.”

“Daphne wants to ask you something.”

“Will you help me choose bases at the Sculpture Shop a week from Sunday?”

•

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“Go out and get the paper,” Daphne said. “I can’t talk. I’ll be late for my seminar.”

Carrying the *Times* and the *Post*, Daisy crossed Broadway and walked up to the Argo.

BUTTERFINGERS! said a headline in the *Post*. “Rare cup found and lost.”

She spread jam on her pancakes and read the article, then opened the *Times*.

Recently Discovered Seventeenth Century Teacup Is Missing From Madison Avenue Gallery

A small, decorated earthenware cup from the factory of John Phillip Elers and David Elers, who worked in Staffordshire, England from 1690 to 1700, was reported missing from James Rose Antique China on Madison Avenue, on Monday.

“If we did not have experts here to examine it, I would think it was a dream,” James Rose said.

The Elers Cup

The brothers, who had worked as silversmiths in London and Cologne, are credited with discovering the Chinese method of turning air-dried stoneware on a lathe before kiln firing, making the pieces uniformly smooth and light weight.

•

Daisy's studio windows looked out on a well on the east side of her building.

She didn't have a view, but every morning she heard crows caw and sea gulls cry.

From her kitchen and bathroom windows she could see the street.

It was freezing outside. I'd be crazy to go, she thought, leaving her building's warm vestibule.

•

A dealer called out to her. He had a book he wanted to sell her.

It was *In the Heart of Paris* by Yvonne de Bremond d' Ars, translated by Barbara Lucas.

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She put the five ones he gave her in her pocket and was ready to cover the parking lot.

Only a few dealers were there that cold day and they were scattered all around.

“Where’s your hat?” asked Mr. Flea.

“I didn’t know it was this cold.”

“It’s cold!”

She sometimes bought small things from him. She asked to see a diamond ring in his glass case.

Some of the silver paint had peeled away, leaving gray plastic underneath.

“Oh, oh, oh,” he cried. “Did you see the way that sparkled? Now, that scares me.”

She looked through a box of white plastic charms and tried to hand it back to a dealer.

Forced to stand and listen to the woman, Daisy saw some of her teeth were missing.

The Elers Cup

Many dealers had missing teeth. Daisy admired their freedom from middle-class values.

She rummaged through a carton under a table and took out a small blue cup.

She found the dealer behind a TV tray.

“You must be frozen!” she said. “Is this a dollar? It’s plaster or plastic, but I like it.”

His head dropped, and she gave him a bill from her pocket.

He didn’t take it.

As she turned to find something to use as a weight, she saw he had a hump under the stained old quilt he was wrapped in.

She walked to the subway, went down the steps, and through the turnstile.

On her first trip to Paris, the stench had astonished her. Now it was in New York.

She went to the downtown end of the platform and opened the book she had bought.

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It was a beautiful afternoon in May.

The Faubourg Saint-Honore was jammed with cars and crowded with people, smart women, for the most part, and foreigners, and all the shop windows were paying sumptuous tribute to the glories of the Paris season.

The train came, and she entered an empty car. Two derelicts were sleeping across the seats.

She ran up the platform and got in the next car before the doors closed.

•

As Daisy entered the flea market she saw a dealer point her out to another man.

He showed her his ID and asked, "Were you here yesterday morning?"

"Yes!"

"Would you mind answering some questions?"

The Elers Cup

Detective Taig was tall, had rough dark hair, green eyes, and a deep voice.

“How did you get here?” he asked.

“Subway.”

“The IRT?”

“How did you know?”

“You came from that direction.”

“Ha, ha, ha,” she laughed.

“How did you get here?”

“What?”

“From Twenty-eighth or Twenty-seventh Street.”

“I thought you tried to trick me!”

As a sculptor she charmed wood and stone. On people, too, she tried to leave a mark.

“Did you look at something here?”

Her dollar was still under the machine part she had used as a weight.

“I found a little cup I liked, and bought it.”

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"Who did you buy it from?"

"There was a man in that chair. Is he dead?"

"You said you bought something from him."

"I asked him if the cup was a dollar, and he nodded. That's important."

"Why?"

"Rigor mortis hadn't set in. I read murders," she said, laughing.

"I'd like to borrow the cup you bought."

She said, "I'm freezing. I haven't had a chance to look around yet."

She gave him her name and address.

Then she stumped across the lot, her face frozen in a grimace, wondering what to do.

"I hope you didn't mind me putting the fuzz on you," said the dealer who had pointed her out.

•

When she got home, she opened her closet and took out a small white porcelain cup, translucent as glass, painted in underglaze blue.

The Elers Cup

Red and gold decoration over the glaze had bubbled in a second firing.

She had been keeping it as an example of what W.B. Honey called “clobbering.”

She put the blue cup in its place and went to her kitchen and washed her purchases.

She was still wearing her coat when her bell rang.

“Who is it?” she called, setting down a paper towel and tiny figure of blown glass beads on her way to the door.

“Detective Taig.”

“Here’s the cup,” she said. “It’s cracked, so be careful with it.”

“Everything wonderful is generally a little cracked,” he quoted.

•

“Did you know a dealer was found stabbed to death at your flea market?”

“I thought he froze!”

“It’s in the *Times*. I’ll read it to you,” Daphne said.

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“An elderly man was pronounced dead of a knife wound at the flea market on Saturday.

““Someone didn't like his prices,” Richard Smith, another dealer, said.

“As dealers reloaded their vans for the long drive home, G.M. Luckey sat in a kitchen chair.

“Some cried when they realized he was dead. Others said they thought it was a good way to go.

“But that was before police found a knife in his back.’ Should I save it for you?”

“No, I'll go down and buy it.”

•

Daisy was leaving a booth when she saw someone she knew.

She crossed the aisle and said, “I see you like American ceramics too!”

John Lorimer, who was holding a vase and bargaining with a dealer, looked at her with loathing.

The Elers Cup

She had breached flea market etiquette by interrupting a sale, she thought as she walked down to the Sculpture Shop.

She pushed open the door.

“Hi, Tom!”

“Where have you been?” he asked.

“Hi, Bruce.

“Hi, Daphne.”

Daphne hoped that being there would inspire Daisy to start working again.

They didn’t need Daisy, so she walked around followed by two art students.

“Are you Daisy Summerfield?”

“Yes. Hi.”

“Bronico wouldn’t let us in to hear you speak.”

“I’ll talk to your class someday.”

She stopped to look at tools.

“What have you been doing?” Bruce asked her.

“Nothing much.”

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“Well, don't be a stranger.”

“Do you have porcelain clay?”

“Over there.”

She didn't use power tools but liked looking at the Dremel and Pow-R-Tron.

She told the two students that she used rough cuts as practice for her final cuts.

She said if she worked in clay, she would have the expense and worry of casting.

•

Daphne needed a bathrobe, so she and Daisy went to Lord & Taylor.

Looking through the racks, Daisy found the only good one.

“That's not your size,” a saleswoman said, and tried to take it from her.

“Do you have it in her size?”

“I'll see.”

The Elers Cup

As soon as she left, Daisy said, “Try it on,” and held Daphne’s coat and bag.

The sleeves were too long and the hem touched the floor. Daisy would have rolled up the sleeves and worn it that way.

She said, “It’s prettier big. You get more fabric. That’s how they’d show it in *Elle*.”

They didn’t have it in a smaller size.

Daphne said she’d take it.

“What did you tell the students beside the Gettysburg Address?” she asked as they passed the library.

“I just sat and talked.”

“They must have loved it!”

•

A wrong conclusion is as good as a right one because it gives you a place to start working.

There is one way for a piece of art to look and the artist has to uncover it.

It’s the same with a crime.

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Someone committed it.

Or, as Margery Allingham says in *Death of a Ghost*,

He did not arrive at [his] conclusion by the decent process of quiet, logical deduction, nor yet by the blinding flash of glorious intuition, but by the shoddy, untidy process halfway between the two by which one usually gets to know things.

•

Daisy got off the bus on the east side of Fifth Avenue, and crossed back to the museum side.

She walked along the cobbles.

Then she walked beside the empty fountain over to the steps, both new since she had loved the museum many years ago when few people went there.

She was climbing the steps when she remembered it was Monday.

But the offices and bookstore were open.

The Elers Cup

So she climbed to the top, entered the Great Hall, and found a seat facing the door.

A baby wearing the bottom half of a pink snowsuit was banging on the bench near her.

Stop it, thought Daisy.

The toddler and her parents lived in the city and the grandparents were visiting.

The young woman spoke angrily to her mother-in-law while the two men sat humbly.

Daisy saw them as a family of potters who had made the little pot.

She thought, Pots have lips, mouths, ears, necks, shoulders, waists, bellies, feet, everything but eyes.

She opened her coat, loosened her scarf, and opened Volume Two of *Pottery and Porcelain* by Warren E. Cox.

She looked up Elers in the index and read, "Yet with all the talk of them there is not one piece which can surely be attributed to them.

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They had used the lathe. They had or had not used molds
according to the authority whose word you wish to believe.
But they certainly did not add one jot to the art of ceramics.

Near her on the bench sat an Indian woman in a green and gold
sari.

Lonely wanderers, she thought.

That was what she would call old ceramic pieces.

Made by human hands, they roam the world sustaining chips and
cracks.

Unable to be touched in museum cases, they lose their reason for
being.

We are all homeless, she thought. Made by an unknown creator,
we roam the earth, getting chipped and cracked.

Somewhere in the building, John Lorimer might be studying the
Elers cup.

The Elers Cup

She walked home through Central Park wondering why Cox had referred to the *Century Dictionary* and said that porcelain was named for the “purple fish” or “Venus shell.”

The Italians called it porcellana, the word for cowrie shells.

Like many artists, Daisy collected shells and knew something about them.

Cypraea tigris, the Tiger Cowrie, and *Cypraea aurantium*, the Golden Cowrie, were good for teething.

She received odd looks when she gave Tiger Cowries as baby presents.

Near the end of *Pottery and Porcelain* Cox spoke of lamps made from vases.

Daisy had turned her first wood sculpture into a lamp.

As she walked through the park, a black-and-white photo stayed in her mind.

The caption said, “Staffordshire salt-glaze bowl of Elers style, c. 1730 - 40. Ht. 3 1/2”.”

It looked like her blue cup minus the paint.

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Daisy got off the bus on 84th Street and crossed back to the museum side.

She passed the massive steps on her way to the smaller entrance which used to be the Junior Museum Entrance.

A fur coat went by. It was John Lorimer. He was crossing Fifth Avenue.

What a walk, she thought, following him east on 81st Street.

He turned uptown on Madison, and when he reached the coffee shop on the southeast corner of 82nd Street, he opened the door and went in.

He took a stool at the counter and Daisy chose one a few stools down.

Biting into her lettuce and tomato sandwich, she inhaled a faint scent of dishwater.

She went to the front, paid, and tied her scarf while Lorimer paid his bill.

The Elers Cup

He left, and she followed him down the west side of Madison Avenue.

He waited for the light, crossed the avenue, and waddled down to James Rose.

He was going to return the Elers cup and say he had taken it to get publicity for it.

She started to cross Madison, changed her mind, and returned to the corner.

Then she walked downtown again, turned west, and crossed Fifth Avenue.

The Kodaly appeared on her right.

They had a new receptionist.

As Daisy chatted with her, Melanie came up the stairs, saying, "I thought I heard your voice!"

Then Alan appeared, dark eyes shining, crooked teeth showing in his smile.

She felt his tie against her cheek and breathed in his cologne.

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He said, "I thought I heard your voice! Why aren't you drawing little teapots?"

They went down the hall to his office. The remains of his lunch were on his desk.

He ordered her a coffee, and she asked if the Witnesses on his mantel were the only two they had left.

"I think there are two more."

"I just had an idea for a show!"

"Tell me your idea."

"Will you do me a favor?"

"Of course."

"Call James Rose and ask if the cup was returned."

He dialed and Daisy heard his side of the conversation. "Leon. Alan Kodaly.

"Fine.

"Any news of the cup?"

"No," he told Daisy.

The Elers Cup

He took a call from Amsterdam, and Daisy leaned back holding her coffee.

Hearing him speak Dutch, it seemed to her that things had not changed much since the Renaissance, when artists had rich and cultured patrons.

He hung up, left the room, came back, and said, “We have four Witnesses.

“Now tell me your idea.”

“You know I love the flea market. All artists do. Look at the things Rembrandt bought at auction!”

He must have bought china, she realized. She would check the 1656 Inventory in *Rembrandt and the Italian Renaissance* by Kenneth Clark when she got home.

Due to the way small pieces of china travel, it was possible to own something of his.

“Of course he paid top prices. He said he did it for the dignity of his profession.” She laughed through her nose.

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“Most artists don't have money, but they set the style for the things people want.

“You could show the things they found.

“Some could be for sale, and the price they paid and where they found it would be part of the art.

“You could sell a Henry Moore maquette someone paid ten dollars for . . .”

“Did you find a Henry Moore maquette?”

“No, but it's something I could find.”

“We'll do it in summer,” he said. “No one wants a solo show in summer.

“Why did you think James Rose got his cup back?”

“I saw Lorimer leave there after the robbery. He was wearing a fur coat.”

He would have liked her to draw Lorimer's portrait, but it wasn't necessary.

He stifled a laugh.

“I told him he was insane.”

The Elers Cup

Alan had a high-pitched laugh that ended, “Oh, my God.”

“I saw him go in there today,” she said, laughing too.

“What were you doing there?”

•

“How much is this?”

Daisy held up a little mother-of-pearl jackknife. The other side was cracked.

“Two dollars.”

She paid.

At the last booth she came to, she saw an old machine part.

“Can you use that?” asked the dealer.

She wondered why he bought it.

“You must be an artist if you can find a use for that.”

“I thought I saw it in the booth of the man who was killed here.”

“He was my father.”

She said, “I think he was a hero. I think all the dealers here are heroes.”

“Why, thank you.”

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"You help us find the things we love."

"We try."

"It must have been great growing up with a father who liked old things."

"He just did this on the side," he said. "He was a corrections officer."

"Where?"

"In Troy."

It gave her an idea.

"The police think an old ex-con might have killed him."

There went her idea.

Some flea market dealers were former drug dealers, she had heard.

•

"Hi," she said. "I'm calling long distance. I'd like to know if someone was a prisoner there."

"We don't give out that information."

"There is no train service to Troy," a ticket agent said.

The Elers Cup

Trains to Albany left Grand Central roughly every two hours, from 8:35 a.m. to 11:00 p.m.

As Daisy opened her travel bag she saw herself in a black turtleneck sweater and pants, talking to a detective in one of the rooms of the prison.

Black ballet slippers, black beret, and tan trench coat would complete her imaginary outfit.

•

“Where have you been?” asked Daphne.

“In Troy.”

“Why were you there?”

“I found out John Lorimer served time for burglarizing a mansion in Rochester.”

“That’s ridiculous.”

“It’s true!”

“What do you care?”

“I told the prison director I was going to draw his portrait for the Met.

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“He was thrilled Lorimer is curator of European Sculpture and Decorative Arts.”

“You shouldn't have told him.”

“I had to say how I knew he was in prison!”

“How did you know?”

“I didn't! I asked to speak to his corrections officer. The only one there back then just died.

“Do you know who has the Elers cup?”

“I do.

“It's painted blue and gold. I bought it at the flea market.”

“That's not it,” Daphne said.

“Why?”

“It wouldn't have been painted, and it wouldn't be at the flea market.”

“That's what Lorimer did to it! I saw him after the robbery.

“I think he thought I saw him take the cup. I could have, through the window.

The Elers Cup

“Remember when Iris Love found the head of Aphrodite in the British Museum basement?”

“That was the only other time you read the paper.”

“I’ve always liked art robberies.”

Daisy’s mind boiled with ideas.

“I know why he painted it!

“One way to tell pottery from porcelain is you can’t get unglazed pottery clean.

“His fingerprints were on it.

“I bet this paint is removable with the right solvent.” She went to her desk and examined it.

“He sprayed the blue on first,” she said, trying to see through her loupe.

“There’s a fine gold spray on the flowers and inside the bowl. The base is gold, and there’s gold around the handle.”

“That’s a great way to get rid of something. Put it in a dealer’s box and walk away.

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“Some of them don't know what they have. You ask a price and see them wonder, what is that?”

•

She decided to write up the Elers cup. It was sitting on her desk and it did look very special.

“He didn't want it for himself,” she said, calling Daphne back. “He wanted it for the museum.

“He knew the trustees wouldn't raise money to buy a cup that looked like part of a child's tea set.

“But if it got a lot of publicity, they'd buy it. They like big acquisitions that make headlines.

“He planned to 'find' it at the flea market, but the dealer recognized him.”

She saw him in his baby hat and quilt, seated in the chair with the tray in front of him.

Daphne was in shock. She dreaded telling Alan.

Daisy opened an old sketchbook to a clean page, found her ruler, and wrote:

The Elers Cup

Elers-ware cup of white unglazed stoneware (covered with blue paint).

Molded and thinned on a lathe.

Concentric rings inside the cup.

She dug at a white spot with the tip of a razor and didn't even scratch it.

In three hundred years it hadn't chipped. It was stoneware.

She went to get another piece of china, a porcelain greyhound reclining.

Three of his paws and his tail were missing. One lovely upturned back paw remained.

He had pale blue spots under the glaze.

His silver-gray eyes, nose, mouth, and collar, very thin and fine, were also under the glaze.

He was stamped *CP*, the *P* within the *C*, on the unglazed, or bisque, or biscuit bottom, also impressed.

She also saw an impressed 4117, or 4417, or 4M7.

The dog looked French.

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Cox listed *CP* as a French mark, Charles Philippe, 1773, but she couldn't find it with the *P* inside the *C*.

She removed the china from the top of her tool chest, raised the lid, and saw her carving tools.

She was like *Kitty Carter Canteen Girl* [Whitman Publishing 1944].

She thought bitterly of what her psychology teacher had once said . . . to their class about how human beings compensate for losses and disappointments. Yes, that was exactly what she was trying to do in making herself a private secret-service agent. She imagined she could do something big enough in uncovering some dastardly plot against her country. This would compensate for her not being able to do more to help the war effort.

She took out a mallet and relocked the chest. She would call Detective Taig.

The Elers Cup

It had been sweet, his quoting Emerson. Sympathy flooded her heart.

What was she thinking? She wouldn't give up the cup!

The phone rang. It was John Lorimer.

"Hi!" she said.

"I demand to know why you followed me. I assume your sculptors block unhinged you.

"You went upstate and pried into my past, but you don't know anything my friends don't know."

"I need background for your portrait."

"I don't want you to do my portrait."

"Please deposit for the next three minutes, or your call will be interrupted."

She heard a coin drop.

"You have two sculptures in our Modern collection. They may be de-accessioned."

He had spoken to his friend Liz.

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“A knife can be a great work of art. Chances are you’ll be buying one.”

He hung up.

•

Daisy was afraid to go out for coffee. It was past noon and her head ached.

Her phone rang.

Daphne said, “We got an anonymous threat in the mail. You don’t believe me.”

“Yes I do! Last night—”

“I made it up.”

Daisy didn’t believe her. She would go to the gallery and find the letter.

“Alan said you have four Witnesses. I would like to keep one.”

“I said you should, but don’t come today. We have to leave at three.”

•

The Elers Cup

Late that afternoon Daisy got out of a west-bound cab across the street from her building.

She had searched Daphne's desk, saying she thought she left a sketch there.

She had taken her lignum vitae mallet with her for protection, but when she felt someone grab her arm, the mallet was still in her coat pocket.

She instinctively raised her sculpture to protect it.

"Call the police," she told neighbors who walked around Lorimer to get into the building.

She soon heard sirens, and three police cars pulled up. A young officer asked her what happened.

"He attacked me."

"How?"

"Give me your money," she growled.

They looked down at Lorimer in his glossy fur coat.

The officer opened his notebook.

"Shouldn't you check on him?" she asked.

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"He's sleeping!"

Other officers stood around.

"Did anyone see what went down?" the first one asked the small crowd that gathered.

"I saw it all," a mentally ill woman said.

"He pulled a gun on her. She kicked it out of his hand, caught it, spun around, and hit him with it."

She smiled, showing toothless gums.

As Daisy smiled back at her, she heard an ambulance wailing and beeping up Broadway.

An older officer said, "What happened?"

"He"—she pointed with the toe of her golden work boot, and it and the worn hem of her jeans reassured her—"grabbed my arm. He scared me."

"Do you know him?"

"No! He jerked my arm and my sculpture hit him."

"Whoa," the officer said, taking it from her.

The Elers Cup

It was dark. The rotating lights bothered her eyes, and she heard buzzing.

A new tenant came outside and she thought, I bet he's a young lawyer.

But he put his hand on the elevator man's shoulder and asked, "Would you mind taking us up?"

Before he left, the elevator man winked at her.

She was surprised to see her neighbors leave the scene. She would always stop to watch a sidewalk drama.

Now paramedics were putting Lorimer onto a stretcher. A thin gold watch gleamed at his wrist when his arm fell over the side before they strapped him in.

They raised the stretcher and wheeled it away. Something shone on the sidewalk.

"What is that?" Daisy asked, going toward it.

An officer picked it up and wouldn't answer.

The first officer returned from the ambulance. Two paramedics got in, and it left.

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Two officers followed it in their car.

Two more officers got in a second blue-and-white and slammed the doors.

The deranged woman had gone.

“What is that?” the young cop asked the older one.

“It’s a sculpture,” said Daisy.

“Here,” the cop said, grinning.

“Careful!” she cried.

“What is it, a rock?”

“It’s granite. If it falls, it will crack.”

A pain sliced through her.

“You hit the guy with this?”

“It was an accident. That sculpture is insured for two hundred thousand dollars.”

“What is it—ott?”

“Yes. May I go up?”

“We’re taking this with us.”

She started to protest.

The Elers Cup

“Careful,” the older cop told her.

He turned a page in his notebook, and she gave him her name and address.

•

“You were great.” The elevator man hugged Daisy. “Are you all right?”

“I’m fine, thanks, Modesto.”

After she locked her door she removed the mallet from her pocket.

She called the Chelsea precinct and asked to speak to Detective Taig.

“Taig,” he said.

“I met you at the flea market when a dealer was killed. I thought he froze!”

“Okay.”

“Something happened tonight that’s related to it.”

“Let me call you back.”

Daisy Summerfield's Art

She called him an hour later, saying, "I used the time to get my facts straight."

She read him her notes but was far more concerned about her sculpture.

"My work has value. I was bringing it home from my gallery."

•

She put on and took off a white jade necklace too fragile to wear under her coat.

She was going to James Rose Antique China to return the Elers cup.

Her phone rang.

"Ms. Summerfield?

"Detective Taig. Good news. Dr. Lorimer won't press charges if you don't.

"He says he knows you. He saw you on the street and wanted to say hello."

"What was he doing in my neighborhood?"

"Going to see friends."

"Who weren't expecting him."

The Elers Cup

Taig grunted.

“Did he have a knife?”

“I can’t tell you that.”

“He wanted to kill me like he killed G.M. Luckey.”

“It’s your word against his. You told an officer he asked you for money.”

“I didn’t know what to say!”

“You can pick up your sculpture at the precinct.”

“Thank you.”

She took the cup out of her pocket. She was going to the precinct first.

•

Daisy pressed the bell and waited for the buzzer.

The Roses were at the rear of the shop.

“May I help you?” asked Mrs. Rose.

“I was here after the robbery. I’m a sculptor. I show at the Kodaly.
Is this the cup?”

Daisy Summerfield's Art

Mrs. Rose handed it to her husband. "The lady wants to know if this is the Elers cup."

He turned it in his hand.

"No," he said.

"But it isn't really blue! You can see the white body underneath!"

"This is not the one. But you got it somewhere and you love it.

"We had bad news," he said, walking her to the door. "A friend of ours was mugged—by a brute!

"Now he is leaving the museum and going to a gallery in Sydney, Australia."

The door clicked open and Daisy stepped outside.

She hadn't asked him how to remove the paint. She remembered it was stoneware.

Ground calcined flint added to the clay for strength, and fired at a heat high enough to vitrify it, it was more like porcelain than earthenware.

"I wanted to catch a killer," she said, climbing Madison Avenue in her work boots.

The Elers Cup

She didn't see the passing shops. She didn't see the passing people wearing brand-new clothes.

She almost got hit by a car going west down a side street and wondered if Lorimer had a contract out on her.

At 86th, instead of waiting for the bus, she went to the kosher restaurant on the corner.

Soon coffee was "coursing through her guts and a sunshine [from the window was] roasting [her] back" [Po Chü-i, translated by Arthur Waley].

She walked back downtown.

•

Sitting beside Alan's desk, she said, "The Roses know he took the cup.

"They won't admit it, because when a museum buys something from them, everything in the shop gets authenticated."

"Do you have the cup?"

She set it on his desk.

Daisy Summerfield's Art

“I don't think this was painted,” he said. “See how worn it is, especially around the rim?”

“Do you think it's special because it is blue?”

“Yes.”

Suddenly she felt happy. “I thought they found it at the flea market and I was upset I didn't find it, but I did find it at the flea market.”

“Yes, you did,” he said so warmly, she had to look away.

Her delicate features fell into lines old and grave. “I apologize if I hurt you or the gallery.”

“Not at all! You're an artist! You want to make things right!”

1990

Since Daisy had stopped sculpting she lost daily contact with the Kodaly Gallery.

Sometimes she was so lonely she wished for a mouse in her studio apartment.

But now she was talking on the phone while looking at a small blanc de chine bowl she had just bought at the flea market.

It was a hot summer day.

“Who?” she asked Daphne.

“James and Bunny Six.”

“Are they related to Jan Six, friend of Rembrandt?”

Holding the bowl to the light, she saw a grayish translucency.

A raised branch of plum blossom looped across the front. One large blossom was incised on the back.

The incised flower had four petals; the tiny raised flowers had five.

“They collect nineteenth-century horse paintings that will go to Yale.”

Daisy Summerfield's Art

“Are they in country day school now?”

“Who?”

“The horses.”

“The Sixes had some china stolen. Alan told them you could find it.”

“I'd love to!”

Police work, like carving, is slow and reductive. There can be no turning back.

You begin with an image of what the piece looks like. You can't change it radically, but you have to be open to change.

“He was joking.”

Artists, like cats, are hunters and loungers. They need silence to hear, space to see, and no timetable.

In seconds these daredevils can perform an amazing feat—or an embarrassing fiasco.

Like felines, artists need praise. They need to know they're admired.

“Where do they live?” asked Daisy.

Gaudy Dutch

Books say you can gently dissuade cats from doing things you don't want them to do.

“Northern Westchester. You'd have to take the train and wear a dress.”

•

Seeing a large set of Fiestaware at the flea market made Daisy melancholy.

The light blue was her favorite, but all the colors were old friends.

“Where's the light blue?” she asked.

“The turquoise?” came the dealer's squeaky voice. “That was the sixth color, in 1937. This is the original 1936 set with five colors.”

“I never liked the white.”

“The ivory?”

“I don't think we had it.”

Up and down the aisles she went, searching for a rare old piece of china.

Daisy Summerfield's Art

She entered a booth and saw an all-white water dropper shaped like a gourd. It had a raised flower, a raised vine, and a three-dimensional bird on it.

She turned it over and saw 9-9 inscribed on the base. Hers had an incised triangle and an *N* or a *Z*.

The feet weren't as beautiful as the ones on hers, she thought, setting it down.

She picked it up again. "How much is this?" she asked.

"Eight."

"Can you make it less?"

"Six."

"I paid five for mine," she said. She remembered had bought it from this woman.

"Do you have any more?" she asked, picturing a carton of water droppers.

"I wish I did!"

Now everything in the blinding sunlight seemed suspect to her.

Gaudy Dutch

Now she had two of what had once been a treasure, and she could imagine putting them in a shopping bag and giving them to a thrift shop.

Everywhere she looked, insane people were lying and bragging about dirty old objects.

She saw someone beautiful in a lawn chair.

As she looked at the person to refresh her eyes she saw it was a Cocker spaniel.

She crossed Sixth Avenue and walked down to 23rd Street and bought a carton of juice and a small bag of potato chips.

Then she walked slowly to the subway, on the downtown shady side of the street.

At Seventh Avenue she put her containers in a trash basket and started down the steps, but too many people were coming up and some were saying, No service.

She walked back to Sixth Avenue and waited for the Number Five bus.

•

Daisy Summerfield's Art

Daisy took the two water droppers to her desk and stood them side by side.

The new one was fractionally shorter.

Clay shrinks when fired, so a copy made from a mold would be smaller than the original.

In some ways the second water dropper was finer. It had more detail.

But over all it wasn't as pleasing.

Her first water dropper was 4 and $\frac{7}{8}$ " high. The new one was 4 and $\frac{6}{8}$ " high. Her phone rang.

"Come to tea!" cried Bunny Six.

"I'd love to!"

Daisy had eaten a large tea every day for two weeks at the Mountbatten Hotel in London, while listening to a harpist.

•

It was hard not to feel political riding above the empty streets of Harlem.

Gaudy Dutch

Where are the artists, thought Daisy, wearing a new dress, an oversize ankle-length cotton jersey.

Trees, the backs of houses, a stonecutters' yard, and other sights went by for another forty minutes.

“Horsefly!”

A few people were on the platform. An equally small number of people got off the train.

“Detective Taig! Hi, I’m Daisy Summerfield. Do you remember me?”

“It’s good to see you.”

“Thanks. I’m surprised they asked you to come.”

“It’s my pleasure.”

They climbed the concrete steps, crossed over the tracks, and went down.

A handsome woman wearing ancient shorts and a sleeveless blouse came over to them.

“I just saw your mother,” she told Taig.

Daisy Summerfield's Art

"I have to make one stop," she said, when she and Daisy were seated in her car.

She drove half a block and parked in front of a deli. "Wait here," she said.

She came out and handed Daisy a bag.

Daisy put it on the floor and said, "I thought Detective Taig was coming with us."

"No such luck.

"Where did you go to school?" Bunny asked, turning onto a private road.

"Dewey."

"What year were you?"

"Sixty-two."

"I was in the class of forty, but I left to marry James."

"I went to New York," Daisy said as they walked down a flagstone hall.

A man sat reading a paper in the dining room.

Bunny said. "I'll get a plate for your sandwich."

Gaudy Dutch

“I’m sorry. I don’t eat meat.”

“You can have Daisy’s sandwich,” Bunny said to the man, and Daisy handed her the grease-spotted bag.

He uncrossed his long legs, and she saw that he wasn’t wearing socks.

“What kind of china was stolen?” she asked.”

“It was white, yellow, green, orange, and blue.”

“Gaudy Dutch?” asked Daisy.

Bunny turned to the man who strongly resembled Cézanne’s gardener Vallier.

Daisy trusted her own instincts so well, she realized he was the gardener.

“Mebbe,” he said, glancing up.

She wasn’t a snob. Why didn’t she tell him her name and hold out her hand?

Artists are true aristocrats, she thought proudly.

Daisy Summerfield's Art

Bunny went through a swinging door and the gardener took his sandwich and paper and followed her, leaving Daisy alone at the dented walnut table.

She had often been in homes like this, for in buying contemporary art, collectors thought they bought the artist as well.

She took her elbow off the table and pulled at the sleeve of her pale green dress.

Black!

She hit it and brushed it with her hand.

She looked at pea-green walls, a cream-color ceiling and mahogany sideboard.

It was a beautiful room, plain and spacious.

She noticed a vertical wall that might be one side of a built-in china cabinet, and got up to look.

Then she knocked on the swinging door and entered a kitchen that dated from the forties.

An open package was on the counter. "May I have a cookie?" she asked.

Gaudy Dutch

“Help yourself.”

•

She had guessed the Sixes' china was Gaudy Dutch because rich people collected it.

Sitting on her oak parquet floor, she looked at her five books by Sam Laidecker.

“The colors used are blue, green, reddish orange and yellow with a reddish brown rim,” she read.

This name is given because it is found chiefly among the Pennsylvania Dutch or in sections to which they migrated. At first it was thought to have been made in the lower counties of Pennsylvania but is now generally believed to have been made in England for the Pennsylvania Dutch trade.

In Volumes I and II of *The American Antiques Collector* she found other small references.

Daisy Summerfield's Art

•

At the north end of the Antiques market, on one of three long tables covered with white sheets, Daisy found a Gaudy Dutch cup and saucer.

A label in the cup said, \$50.

A friendly young woman came over to her.

“Can you do any better?” Daisy asked.

“I can do forty-five. That’s the Grape pattern.”

“Can you make it forty?”

She thought it over and agreed.

“Do you have any more?” Daisy asked, watching her wrap them in newspaper.

“Gaudy Dutch is hard to find,” the young woman said. “That’s why it’s priced so high.”

As Daisy took the package from her she saw that a man in a black raincoat was watching.

She went to the gate just at the right time.

Gaudy Dutch

She saw Detective Taig. “I thought we were going to the same place,” she told him.

“I guess not.”

“I want to show you this out-of-print booklet I ordered. I got it yesterday.”

“I think the Sixes’ china was Gaudy Dutch. Take a look at these patterns.

“The thief may sell it here.”

“How did you like Horsefly?”

“It’s beautiful.”

He had been born on the wrong side of the tracks, smarter than his friends who went to Ivy League schools.

He probably had all their prejudices with none of their advantages or privileges.

She said, “I found one cup and saucer, but the woman I bought them from isn’t a criminal.”

“That’s great,” he said. “It’s hard to find.”

Daisy Summerfield's Art

She pictured a rough-haired little boy waiting for his mother to finish work.

Sit still, sonny. If I drop this Gaudy Dutch, you can kiss the Police Academy goodbye. We'll be going to the poorhouse.

“. . . if you don't mind my asking.”

“What?”

“How much?”

“Forty dollars. I don't even like it.”

“Isn't it worth three times that?”

“Yes! That was the 1940s price. How do you know how much they're worth?”

“You know they'd appreciate in value,” she answered for him.

“Want to get some coffee?” he asked.

“Too bad it wasn't Fiestaware,” she said, walking down Sixth Avenue. “There's a big set back there.”

They crossed 23rd Street, ignoring the cafés in the new professional photography district.

Gaudy Dutch

Her subway was a few doors past the coffee shop, on the near corner of Seventh Avenue.

As they cooled off in the air-conditioning, he said, “You must like the flea market.”

“I love it! Why do people say material things aren’t important? They’re denigrating the work that goes into them.

“When I was a child, we lived on a lake in Minnesota.

“I’d be in the backseat of our car, thinking, I’m the girl who’s in this car.

“That was my identity on the ride to town.

“There was a hardware store in Mound, and my parents would always buy me something.

“On the way home, I might be the owner of a Princess Elizabeth paper doll. Does that sound familiar?”

“No.”

“What about your badge?”

“It’s my ID.”

Daisy Summerfield's Art

As she laughed she saw the man in the black raincoat sitting at the counter watching her.

“It doesn't identify me to myself.”

He reached in his pocket and took out a photo. “Do you know Florence Vito?”

“No. Why?”

“She was murdered.”

“At the flea market?” It should be her case.

“In her apartment. She had a lot of china.”

“Is any missing?”

“There are two clean circles in the dust.”

“That sounds like a poem!”

•

She walked to the downtown end of the platform reading the booklet by Eleanor J. Fox and Edward G. Fox.

Gaudy Dutch

Gaudy Dutch designs are not of English origin, though they are no doubt based on imitations of Chinese and Japanese ware manufactured principally in England.

Then she got confused.

Ultimately, however, the methods of manufacture and the motifs used in Gaudy Dutch go back to China and Japan.

“Oh, okay.”

Though China originated the method of producing “Imari ware,” it was not until Japan began to flood the European market with this ware that China copied the method back to make up for the losses it was suffering in European markets because of the demand for Japanese wares.

Daisy Summerfield's Art

Daisy went to the edge of the platform and looked down the track.

As she returned to her Lally column she saw the man from the coffee shop.

What were the motifs that appeared on Chinese and Japanese wares “in the Imari style” imported by the Europeans? The Chinese revered four flowers: Lotus, Cherry Blossom, Peony, and Chrysanthemum.

Her car was crowded. She stayed in front of the door, touching her hip to the arm of the seat next to her.

The train lurched as it started and she set her feet apart for balance.

Except during rush hour it was customary for only two people to stand in front of each set of doors.

She reopened the booklet and looked at garish color photos of the patterns: Butterfly, Carnation, Dahlia, Double Rose, Dove, Grape, Leaf,

Gaudy Dutch

Oyster, Primrose, Single Rose, Strawflower, Sunflower, Urn, War Bonnet, Zinnia, and No Name.

She liked War Bonnet and Oyster.

Urn also appealed to her.

Isn't there a King's Rose, she wondered when she felt someone in front of her.

We must be at a station, she thought, and the doors on this side will open.

Go to the other side, she thought. But sometimes only one door opened.

She went to the other door.

The person went with her.

An artist looks at everything. Looking down, she thought, that's not his penis. It's a gun!

"Give me the cup and saucer."

What do I do, she wondered.

•

Daisy Summerfield's Art

Through a window across the car she saw a still stone wall. The train had stopped in the tunnel.

Leaning away from the gun she intruded on the man in the seat below her.

He got up and left.

Someone took his seat and quickly got up. More people went to the other end of the car.

Daisy reached in her pocket and found the Acme Thunderer whistle on her key ring and blasted it.

Her attacker left.

The train pulled into 72nd Street, the doors opened, and the car emptied.

Daisy pulled the emergency cord and went to the door and blew her whistle.

The doors stayed open and an express train came in.

Should she run across the platform and take it? She could get off at 94th Street.

Gaudy Dutch

Ding dong went the signal. The doors closed. Ding dong. They opened and closed.

The train started to move.

The next stop was 79th Street.

There was a church on one side and a bank on the other, but they were on the west or downtown side.

Seventy-ninth was a local stop. She would be on the uptown side of Broadway.

As they came into the station she saw the platform lined with uniforms.

She said, "I pulled the cord."

"We got her."

"Who?"

"The sick passenger."

"I was attacked!"

Officers surrounded her. One of them wore colored ribbons on his chest.

Daisy Summerfield's Art

"I blew my whistle." She opened her sweaty hand and showed it to him.

"What did he look like?" asked the sergeant. "Was he white, black, or Hispanic?"

"White. He had dyed black hair, and he was wearing a black raincoat."

The sergeant spoke into his portable.

"We're looking for a male Caucasian wearing or carrying a black coat. Subject may be armed with a handgun.

"Name?"

"I wasn't a victim."

"We may want you to look at pictures."

She gave him her name and address and an African-American cop wrote it down.

"We'll run you home," he said.

"What if he follows us?"

"Where you want to go?"

Gaudy Dutch

She wanted to change her appearance so the black-haired man wouldn't recognize her.

Walking upstairs she thought of Morris Brothers, two blocks from her apartment.

The black cop opened the cruiser.

“Eighty-fourth and Broadway,” she said, getting in.

The back was redolent of terror. The front was redolent of doughnuts and coffee.

•

“Why don't she wear makeup?” the fat cop asked, pulling away from the curb.

“Not my problem,” the black cop said.

•

Daisy had a gift for finding things to buy. A white, red and blue jersey was on display.

The front said NORGES ISHOCKEYFORBUND 18-9-1934 in a circle around a polar bear.

Daisy Summerfield's Art

Three red-outlined cowries went across each shoulder. They might have been pucks. They were hexagonal, with a horizontal line through the center.

On the back of the jersey was a player's name, SKAAR, and his number, 11.

The size was XL.

"This is the only one we have," the salesgirl taking it down for her said.

Daisy pulled it on, rolled up the sleeves, and gave the tag to the cashier.

"Where did you get this?" he asked.

She walked home pleased to have bought the jersey made in Finland.

At first their interiors look drab, but they don't need decoration. Everything is so well made.

Badly made things also are beautiful or can become beautiful, she thought.

Gaudy Dutch

She thought of getting rid of her desk and buying a tabletop hockey game.

She remembered violent games in shoe boxes and tried to recall how that went.

No gunman awaited her on the brown leatherette sofa inside her lobby.

Pedro took her up with the woman and miniature poodle who lived across the hall.

•

As she walked in, her phone rang.

“Where were you?” asked her father.

“The flea market.”

“I thought you like to go early, before everything is picked over,” her mother said.

Everything was picked over before she woke up!

She put down the phone and pulled off the jersey.

“Why so late?” she heard.

Daisy Summerfield's Art

She laid the jersey on her bed thinking she should have pearls to wear with it.

“I had coffee with someone.”

“Who did you have coffee with?” asked her father.

“Someone from the flea market.”

He couldn't believe she was so stupid!

“An accomplice could have come to your apartment with a van and cleaned you out!”

She opened her bag, took out the cup and saucer, and was briefly amused when she thought she hadn't removed all of the newspaper wrapping.

She set the cup on her cardboard chest of drawers and held the saucer to the light.

No shadow of her fingers showed through it.

Gaudy Dutch was pottery, not porcelain. It shouldn't be translucent and it wasn't.

It looked like the magazine section of a newspaper.

•

Gaudy Dutch

“What’s new?” asked Alan Kodaly.

“I’m thinking of making ice hockey rinks or ice hockey games in cardboard.”

“Hm!”

She wasn’t working and must be suffering, so he called to let her know he cared.

She found her oil paints, and started sorting and stacking them in the box.

Cadmium red pale

Cadmium red medium

Magenta

Vermillion extra

Cadmium orange

Red ochre

Scheveningen lemon yellow

Cadmium yellow light

Daisy Summerfield's Art

Scheveningen yellow medium

Yellow ochre deep

Gold ochre

Old Holland golden green

Green umber

Green earth

Prussian blue

Cerulean blue

Cobalt blue

Cobalt violet pale

Raw umber

Burnt umber

Red umber

Dark ochre

Intense black

Gaudy Dutch

These and two large tubes of Mixed white NR 2 were made by Old Holland.

She had also picked up a tube of Williamsburg's Zinc buff and Unbleached titanium.

"I think I'm close to finding the Sixes' china," she said, putting the paints away.

"You're too much!" Alan's voice was filled with love, amusement, and respect.

•

She went to her china cabinet to look at her Gaudy Dutch cup and saucer.

They weren't marked 806, 2/1036, as Laidecker said the grape pattern usually was.

In yellow inside the foot rim of the saucer, and in red inside the foot rim of the cup was a dot, a line, and a dot—an eye, a nose, and an eye—a china painter's signature.

Daisy Summerfield's Art

But the red mark was thin and tight. The yellow mark was looser, more expansive.

There was a mystery there.

Two lines, 1/16" long and 5/32" apart, were cut into the foot rims.

•

Any doubt that the Sixes' stolen china was Gaudy Dutch had been cancelled in the subway.

Daphne would say it was a coincidence.

The phone rang.

"Now I know Bunny Six didn't call you, or you'd be out getting into trouble."

"She did call."

"When?"

"Last week, and I went to Horsefly."

"Why?"

"That's where they live!"

"They live on Park Avenue, too, you know."

"You said they live in Horsefly."

Gaudy Dutch

“I said that because you never go anywhere.”

“They didn’t know what their stolen china was. I guessed it was Gaudy Dutch.

“On Sunday I found a Gaudy Dutch cup and saucer at the flea market.

“I know you don’t take subways, but this is funny.”

“I take subways!”

“Then you know those signs, DO NOT LEAN AGAINST THE DOOR?”

“Of course.”

“I was standing in front of a door reading a book called Gaudy Dutch, and a man who had seen me buy the cup and saucer held a gun on me.

“Don’t you think I looked like a Marsden Hartley painting, with NO SE APOYE CONTRA LA PUERTA above my head and a big black gun in my stomach?”

•

Daisy Summerfield's Art

At the northernmost booth beside the chain link fence on Sixth Avenue, there were always small pieces of china.

Daisy reached for a plain white cup decorated with orange, dark blue, green, and luster buds.

Inside the bowl, three dark blue panels were set in a field of flowers. The luster turned violet as she revolved it.

“Thees ees a very good cup,” the dealer said.

“A woman told me eet ees an expensive cup. But eet’s missing hees saucer.

I’ll go up to forty, thought Daisy.

“Tree.”

The black-haired man was nowhere in sight, and she paid and walked away.

She saw eight bluebird plates for \$25, considered buying them, and went on.

At a used-clothing booth she saw a maroon and gold sweater with a manufactured rip and COMME des GARÇONS label.

Gaudy Dutch

She asked a young man the price and he showed it to a dark-haired woman who was talking to a man.

What would it have cost her to say Daisy would look great in it? She would have made \$50.

•

I haven't done this in years, Daisy thought, getting a pen and sketchbook.

She drew the ellipse of the Gaudy Dutch cup, then the curved sides, then the straight line of the foot rim on each side, then the curved bottom line.

She started drawing the "grape" cluster, starting with its yellow center.

She drew three half-circles around the center, five half-circles around those, seven more around the five, and so on.

Then she outlined the blue leaf in front of the cluster, making it too large.

She drew another ellipse, then the walls, then the foot.

Daisy Summerfield's Art

This time she drew the blue leaf first. Now my drawing will balance, she thought.

She picked up the cup and examined the painting. First came the colors, then the lines, sure and beautiful.

They were said to have been made in England and sent here for the lower classes.

But she thought they were painted here.

They looked like fraktur schriften, the beautiful illustrated documents of that time.

•

Sunday: "If this is a Bernard Leach, I'll kill you."

"I only used him as an example!"

Daisy was taking a bag from the dealer when she saw the black-haired man.

He was wearing Bermuda shorts.

He was leaving the booth across the aisle, going to the next one down.

Gaudy Dutch

The dealer who had threatened to kill Daisy was helping someone else.

Daisy interrupted them. “Do you know that man wearing Bermuda shorts?”

“No.”

She stood holding the bag as the talk of costume jewelry flowed over her.

“Is this Miriam Haskell?”

Daisy had worn her large jersey dress. One of the dealers didn’t recognize her.

The black-haired man was going down the aisle.

Daisy went to a booth across from him and looked at two tiny tin cars.

“I can do better on those,” the dealer said.

Following the black-haired man at a distance, she came to the booth where she had seen the Fiestaware.

“Did you sell the Fiestaware?” she asked.

Daisy Summerfield's Art

“We’ve still got it if you want it. We aren’t selling the pieces separately.

“No?”

“What you saw is the eight place-settings plus the large serving pieces.

“It came from a wealthy estate. You want it for three hundred bucks?”

She shook her head.

“That’s two hundred below book.” He showed her a book on Fiestaware.

Looking up from the book, she saw the black-haired man heading for the exit.

She got there in time to hear a dealer scream, “Give me back my tea strainer!”

“I wanted to see it in sunlight.”

“Why didn’t you ask me?”

It’s no good. The marks are no good.”

Gaudy Dutch

“What do you mean the marks are no good? No one can fake silver marks!”

The black-haired man gave him back the tea strainer and went out the exit.

Daisy followed him across 25th Street, past the regular flea market.

She saw her old friend Mr. Flea wet his head under the hydrant and get in line for a pita.

•

After 24th Street she saw old clothes, worn shoes, and broken appliances set out on flattened cartons.

She followed the black-haired man across 23rd Street.

She followed him across 22nd Street, cradling the jar in the crook of her arm.

They crossed 21st and passed a coffee shop.

They passed Hong Color where photos of her sculpture were printed by Ben.

She waved at the gate over the dark window.

Daisy Summerfield's Art

The wine jar was heavy. Her arm, where the plastic bag rested, was wet.

She started carrying it by the handles.

She thought, Paper is absorbent. Paper kills germs. Plastic bags spread viruses.

They were still on the east side of Sixth Avenue, crossing the little streets below 4th Street.

At Houston Mr. Black turned east.

Daisy was bound to see someone she knew.

Linda Leone came to the hardware store ten times a day, working on her loft.

Even on Sundays, speeding trucks made the wide street a danger.

You weren't safe on the median either. Two people Daisy knew had been injured there.

At the corner of Thompson, Mr. Black crossed on just one light. Daisy looked left.

Gaudy Dutch

Oncoming traffic was half a block away. She ran across the westbound thoroughfare, waited a beat, and made it across the eastbound lanes.

•

“Put me down! Put me down!” she cried, feeling for her glasses in her pocket.

“Things are great for me,” her old boyfriend Joe De Leo said.

An woman sitting outside her shop on a wooden chair watched cynically.

Daisy said, “I’m tailing that guy in Bermuda shorts. I have to find out where he lives.”

Mr. Black turned the corner.

“Hurry, Joe!”

At Prince and Thompson, Daisy stopped beside the grocery store, out of breath.

She saw Mr. Black enter a building.

Joe came back. “Want me to go in?”

Daisy Summerfield's Art

As a contractor he had renovated several small buildings in the area.

"My Aunt Florence lives there."

The murdered woman was his aunt?

"Florence Fanuzzi."

"Hoh." Daisy let out her breath and looked across the street at the bakery.

"What's that still doing there?" she asked. "I bought a postcard of it once and thought I was so lucky to get it.

"It's in a time warp," she went on. "It looks like a super-realist sculpture.

"Does someone pay to keep it there? What a great art form! There's no art anymore."

"Watch it, Summerfall. You haven't seen my funnels yet."

"Are you going to ring your aunt's buzzer?"

She fluffed her hair.

Joe tried some keys and opened the door.

Gaudy Dutch

The mailboxes were sprayed gold, and the first name, Dawn Dishwashing, made her heart sink.

But when Joe gave her a pencil and paper and she started copying, she saw real names of illegal sublets.

It was dark between the worn wooden stairs and the door.

Joe was holding the inner door open, but the weak western sunlight couldn't get through.

She had a stroke of luck: J. Black.

•

At a restaurant on Sullivan Street, the maitre d', or the owner or a hit man, greeted Joe.

He indicated her.

"This lady is the love of my life," Joe said. "She don't eat no meat, capisce?"

"Vegetale solamente.

"So," he said. "My funnels. You know who bought one? Henry Taig. He's got two of your pieces."

Daisy Summerfield's Art

“He had a sculpture of mine once, but he returned it. No,” she said.

“He didn’t have it!”

“You’re thinking of his son. I’m talking about the old man. He and his wife threw a party last Wednesday.”

“For your funnel?”

“Yeah.” Joe’s small black eyes gleamed. “There I am, with you and Stella.”

•

Daisy came home from Joe’s loft smiling over his six-foot aluminum funnels

It was hard material to work with.

“It isn’t too bad if you’ve done custom duct work,” he said.

“I know you and your father made stove pipes and pie plates.”

“You remember!”

If good honest labor were still respected, Joe wouldn’t have thought of being an artist.

•

Gaudy Dutch

“I’d like to read you some names,” Daisy said. “J. Black.” She held her breath.

“C. Chen. A. Hall.”

“Cousin Arthur?”

“These are from a tenement on Prince Street!”

“We’ll get him to come play tennis with you,” Bunny said. “He collects Gaudy Dutch.”

•

“What can I do for you?” asked Taig.

“Tell me if Florence Vito was shot.”

“I told you she was shot.”

“Do you know who did it?”

“No.”

He hadn’t asked to see her Gaudy Dutch cup and saucer, so the circles must have come from serving plates or bowls.

Gaudy Dutch teapots were oblong.

Daisy Summerfield's Art

“The Taigs didn’t have Gaudy Dutch,” she said, unaware of her slip. “I told you there was a big set of Fiestaware at the flea market. It was theirs. She sold it!”

“I thought it was something like that.”

“You knew she was crazy?”

“I’ll let you go.”

He had known Bunny Six all his life.

She was often away at McLean’s fighting the schizophrenia that plagued her distinguished family.

He had last seen her two weeks ago, limping in high heels she said she bought at the thrift shop, at the party for his father’s latest sculptor, Joe de Lilo.

“What did you do with Ms. Summerfield?” he had asked.

His parents would have loved having her there, no matter what kind of shmatteh she was wearing.

One of their guests was a social worker. He would be seeing her again in a few hours.

Gaudy Dutch

The guest of honor, a big homely guy with small dark eyes, had spent the evening in a clearing with his sheet metal funnel.

“It’s Henry’s method of bamboo control,” Taig heard his mother say.

•

“I found the Sixes’ china and solved a murder.”

“That’s terrific. I wish I had time to talk. I just came home to change. We’re going to a lawn party.”

“Daphne, do you know Henry Taig?”

“They own two of your sculptures.”

•

“I forgot I sold them,” Bunny said. “They cost fifteen dollars at the thrift shop. James wants to keep the profit.”

Daisy hadn’t met the descendent of Rembrandt’s melancholy friend.

The gardener raised cold blue eyes. “Nevah give away money.”

•

Daisy Summerfield's Art

It was only a two-mile walk into town and Daisy swung along, looking forward to telling Taig that Bunny's cousin Arthur Hall had killed Florence Vito.

At the cafe across the street from the station she bought coffee and a pastry to go.

As she waited alone she hoped Bunny hadn't told Cousin Arthur about her.

She struck up a conversation with a retarded man cleaning the platform.

"I'm sorry," he said. "I have to go now."

1991

Daisy was at the flea market talking with a dealer named Moe when she saw an old Chinese vase.

She went over to it, picked it up in both hands, and turned it over. It was heavy!

He said, "That's from the thirties."

He thought it was Art Deco. She knew it would be expensive.

"How much is it?" she asked.

"It's sold," he said, his face "twisted like a seashell." He hated most of the customers.

"How much was it?"

"Fifty."

"I'll just take it and go!"

She felt a cool breeze as she studied it through the lower part of her glasses.

"I can't do that."

"Why not?"

Daisy Summerfield's Art

But she set it down and edged between his tables to see what else he had brought.

“Thirties,” she said, trying to extract something with a tiny blue and white pattern.

It was the inside of the bottom half of an antique cardboard box.

In it were a seashell—a volute—and a clump of paper—a little notebook.

Only the back of the pink-spotted, red paper cover remained.

She read,

So dainty her dance

on a pink petal

I could not tell her

she was make-believe.

“You have the right to remain silent,” she heard. She looked up and saw Detective Taig and two officers.

The Sung Vase

The officer who had read Moe his rights put away the card and handcuffed him.

“I wanted this box.”

“Take it,” Moe said.

“Why are you arresting him?”

Taig picked up the vase.

“He didn’t steal that!” Daisy said. “He buys his things upstate!”

“I bought it here.”

“That’s Sung dynasty,” a strawberry blonde warned Taig.

“Moe said it’s from the thirties.”

No one heard Daisy.

They were going out the exit to the blue-and-white police cars parked at the curb.

“Tell them who you bought it from,” she called to Moe.

“I don’t even know.”

“How can we find out who sold it to him?” she asked the market manager.

He said, “It was a derelict.”

Daisy Summerfield's Art

“What did he look like?”

“I didn't see anything.”

She went out to the street.

“Pay at the gate,” a market employee called, as though nothing had happened.

•

She crossed Sixth Avenue and saw a small group of people concerned about a sick derelict.

“Did anyone call 911?” she asked the big man to her left.

As she looked at three pay phones across 24th Street, she heard sirens.

They got louder and an ambulance pulled up.

By the time they put the man on a stretcher, everyone knew he was dead.

No chalk mark was traced around his body. No yellow tape preserved the scene.

A bottle lay on the sidewalk.

The Sung Vase

“They should take that,” Daisy said to the big man standing next to her.

“He was an attic.”

“They still should take it!”

Standing over the liquor bottle, she tried to convey to passing strangers that she was waiting for a friend near the topless bar on the corner.

At last she took a tissue from her pocket, picked up the bottle, and carried it around the corner and down to the deli and asked for a plastic bag.

•

She set it down in her apartment on the eleventh floor of a prewar building at 86th and Broadway.

She removed the antique box from her bag and opened the notebook and read:

I will be a poet

and keep in my notebook

Daisy Summerfield's Art

the sound of spring leaves
flattered by a breeze.

She turned the page.

Shadows are sudden in winter
Gray falling on gray grows black
like a kind hand on my head
when I stand long at the window.

Facing it:

Oh, I'm a weed
of different breed
a mustard seed
in tight glass bead.

She turned another page.

The Sung Vase

A tiny brown wren
sat snug in my hand
and I stroked him
with careful forefinger.

Madness
threw her book down,
lay smiling
in the sun.

How is it
when nighttime comes
and the flower
folds to sleep?

She had a boxed two-volume biography of Emily Dickinson.

Daisy Summerfield's Art

The endpapers on Volume Two showed samples of Dickinson's handwriting.

She thought of Moe being handcuffed and led away, and of the strawberry blonde in a leather jacket over a low-cut top.

She contrasted the thick Chinese vase with the fragile relic of an unknown poet.

Why shouldn't it have value?

Tonight is the party at the gallery, she thought in a panic, but the party was a week away.

•

The seashell, *Voluta musica*, had black markings that resembled music.

Daisy was putting it beside *Voluta lyrical*, a small brown shell, somewhat rare and expensive, when her phone rang.

Daphne said, "My hair colorist retired, and the new one made it too red!"

The Sung Vase

“She must be good, or they wouldn’t have hired her. I got a little notebook of manuscript poems. They inspired me to put china words together.”

Plymouth,

Davenport,

Longport.

Pickle Leaf,

Pickle Dish,

Pickle Cup.

“I like it,” said Daphne.

Pepper pots,

Cup plates,

Come to me

And bring your mates.

Daisy Summerfield's Art

They heard the signal for Daisy's call waiting.

"I won't take it," she said.

"I have a million things to do for the party."

Daisy opened the notebook at random and read:

He and I like
electric light
on nighttime trees.

What a disappointment! They couldn't be old. She read from the
opposite page:

I took a rose
and pressed it.
A dead flower,
I possess it.

"I like yours better," Daphne said.

The Sung Vase

•

There was an absence of light. Daisy's studio windows looked out on a well.

From her kitchen window she could see the street. The rain began coming down.

When she held the Chinese vase in Moe's booth, she saw trillions of bubbles in the greenish white glaze.

She opened a sketchbook and wrote down everything she remembered:

Approx. 9" tall.

Flared mouth.

Round seal impressed in base.

She opened her china cabinet and took out a square green dish she had bought at a junk shop.

Her phone rang.

"Is this Daisy Summerfield?"

"Yes."

Daisy Summerfield's Art

“My name is Jane Hammond. I’m a reporter for *The New York Times*.”

“Hi.”

“I’ve been assigned to cover the Kodaly Gallery’s seventy-fifth anniversary party.”

“That’s great.”

“I’d like to get firsthand accounts from some of the artists.”

“Good idea.”

“Would you be willing to talk to me?”

“Sure.”

“Is this a good time?”

Daisy sat holding the square green dish. The dragon was traveling the sky searching for a flaming pearl.

Now she would do the same.

The four corners of his sky were deep scratched pools of glaze made iridescent by old age.

It was true of the sky through which she would be traveling.

The Sung Vase

“You know about Philip Kodaly coming from Hungary and working for Ben Rubenstein.”

“Oh, yes. I’ve read everything in our files and spoken to Alan Kodaly.”

Daisy felt a pang. “Did he suggest—?”

“He talked about your work, of course, but I called you on my own.”

Daisy’s work was her life and he was of the utmost importance to her work.

“. . . what you can tell me about showing at the Kodaly for the past twenty-five years.”

“Thirty.”

“How did you meet Mr. Kodaly?”

“Alan?”

“Whom did you meet first?”

“Alan.”

“Did you make an appointment?”

“Yes.”

Daisy Summerfield's Art

“And he liked your work.”

His dark eyes had shone with excitement. She had seen his crooked teeth when he smiled.

“He was great.”

“You’ve been with him a long time.”

“You make art for yourself, but when someone believes in your work, you do it for him too.

“You picture him when you work.

“You feel less lonely.

“It makes you feel welcome—that your work will be welcome.”

“Did Philip Kodaly encourage your work?”

“Yes, but he was encouraging Alan. Alan had just been made a director.

“My work was his work.”

“I’ve never heard it described that way before.”

“An artist’s career is formed by a gallery.”

Jane Hammond’s keys were clicking and Daisy waited for her to catch up.

The Sung Vase

“There are many famous artists in the Kodaly Gallery stable.”

“Right.”

“Did you find that daunting?”

“No. If I could go back to what I was saying?”

“Please.”

“The gallery creates an artist’s persona and presents it to the public.

“It’s the same kind of work as an artist’s.

“An artist sees something on another plane and tries to make it intelligible.

“Artists work alone. They can’t meet the public. Their work is too deep.”

“Thank you. You’ve given me real insight into what a gallery means to an artist.”

“We need them to sell our work. You can’t grow if you have old work around you.

Daisy Summerfield's Art

“There’s a man in my neighborhood looks who like Monet. Same beard, same build, same thick glasses. He’s well groomed like Monet and he wears red suspenders.

“Wouldn’t it be great if I invited him to the party and he was Monet?”

She returned to her sketchbook and tried to picture the foot of the vase.

Three and a half inches in diameter, she guessed.

She drew the vase with a peony on either side, one with a bud at the upper right.

The surface was scarred by millions of tiny bubbles broken in the glaze.

When she had looked inside it in the sunlight she saw orange translucence.

•

A furniture dealer was set up in Moe’s Saturday spot at the southeast corner.

The Sung Vase

Daisy asked the dealers across the aisle if they had seen him. They said, "Maybe he's at the street fair."

On this brilliantly sunny fall day there were fewer dealers than usual.

She left the market and saw Taig.

"I have a liquor bottle that was lying near the derelict that died on Twenty-fourth Street," she said.

"I didn't think the police were at all careful. Of course, they live in the suburbs and just work here."

"That's not how they feel," he said.

She tensely lit a cigarette. "It smells funny. It was lying right next to him."

"Have you ever smelled rotgut or a derelict?"

"What are derelicts?" she cried. "People!"

"I'm not a humanist.

"When I see an ambulance I think, Wouldn't it be great if they were going to save a dog, a cat, or a rat?"

Daisy Summerfield's Art

“Rats are beautiful intelligent animals who survive on our filth—and we blame them.

“We’re the ones who are dirty!

“Did you know the market manager saw Moe buy the vase from a derelict?”

“Believe it or not, by the time we go to the grand jury we’ll know as much as you do.”

She dropped her cigarette and stepped on it.

“I am surprised you’d litter.”

•

Another furniture dealer was set up in Moe’s Sunday spot.

Somehow the whole day went by and Daisy just had time for a shower.

She put on white socks, stepped into low-heel black pumps from Agnès B., and took a pink, blue, cherry, and white silk kimono out of her closet.

The Sung Vase

It was an antique Ikat weave, very pretty and festive, but she had never tried it on. She now realized that she had to wear it with jeans and a T-shirt.

She pulled back her hair and fastened it with her pink and blue plastic barrette.

She looked in the mirror at her oval face, straight nose, and brown eyes behind steel-rimmed glasses.

She was late.

She locked her door, rode down to the lobby, and took a cab through the park.

•

Cameras flashed as Alan kissed her and said, “I liked your quote in the *Times*.”

Lulu King said, “May I?” and took Daisy’s small face in her hands and kissed her.

She met a man named Chris.

“. . . sculpture,” she heard him say above the loud music and chatter.

Daisy Summerfield's Art

She nodded, smiling.

He was a writer.

He led her to the second room, away from the largest crowd, saying, "I'm intrigued by your name."

She stared.

A spotlight hit her black wooden ark on its case-hardened limestone block.

She didn't have to read the label. It was on loan from the Seattle Museum.

It was made of wood and painted black.

Chris was saying, "There's a book by a writer named Edmund Wilson."

"Yes. *I Thought of Daisy*. He said her feet were like little cream cheeses.

"And he had the nerve to criticize Fitzgerald!"

Wilson's "Daisy" was Edna St. Vincent Millay. He was in love with her in his youth.

The Sung Vase

He might not have known that “burning the candle at both ends” was an old Scottish saying.

Daisy went to a buffet table.

She saw Jack Katz in his rust-color corduroy jacket, his blue eyes full of fun.

“Did you go to the flea market today?” he asked.

His wall sculptures of twigs, string, and bits of paper were complex and beautiful.

He was now painting them industrial colors: orange and green, and white and black.

She wanted one, but they were fragile dust traps.

She said, laughing, “I collect old china. I like to take it home and wash it.”

She wanted to talk about the dealer being arrested, but Taig’s parents were there and might hear her.

“Artists should clean up the country,” she said. “The galleries could document our work.

Daisy Summerfield's Art

"I hate wasting my time on earth doing stupid things like keeping a ledger.

"I should send the IRS ten percent of my earnings, no deductions, and go to jail."

"Barnett Newman ran for mayor of New York on the artists' ticket."

"I didn't know that!" she cried.

"There's a photo of Barnett Newman, Betty Parsons, and Jackson Pollock in front of an elevator.

"I thought it was an elevator, but it was one of Newman's paintings!"

"Did you see your sculpture?"

"Yes."

He described its beauty to her.

She was vegetarian and she tried to be vegan.

Fruits, vegetables, seeds, nuts, and grains provided everything she needed.

The Sung Vase

The last time she saw Dr. Gutman, he said her calcium level was high-normal.

When she went to openings, she stuffed herself with fresh vegetables.

Starving artists were not invited to these parties, so much food was wasted.

One Christmas an art critic took Daisy to a party at his agent's office.

The agent said the piece on her work was the best in the critic's new book.

He introduced her to his authors and their spouses.

When she spoke about their books their hungry eyes begged her to say more.

Others looked on eagerly.

She was a reader!

The only food at that party was an enormous wheel of cheese that might have represented the earth in a low-budget disaster movie.

Daisy Summerfield's Art

Odd-shaped pieces were constantly being cut off and wolfed down until crumbs remained.

These were put together and eaten by a shaggy writer who never left the cheese's side.

The guests patted their stomachs when saying good night, then took the elevator down to the silent lobby and went out to the dark and snowy midtown street.

•

Daisy saw the strawberry blonde who accused Moe of stealing her vase.

She was wearing a short strapless black velvet dress—and wearing it well.

She saw the man who had been at the flea market with her. “Hi,” she said to him. “I’m Daisy Summerfield.”

“I’m a fan.”

“Thanks!”

“I love your kimono.”

“Who are you?” she asked.

The Sung Vase

“Osmond Fox.”

“I knew I knew you from somewhere!”

His shop was uptown from James Rose Antique China, on Madison Avenue.

She sometimes went in and looked around.

“If I had known it was you, I would have come out,” he said.

If you aren’t out, I don’t know who is, she thought, trying not to laugh.

He introduced her to the strawberry blonde.

•

She saw an empty cab coming but didn’t take it.

I’ll walk up to Eighty-sixth and take the bus, she thought, hearing her little heels tap romantically.

She stopped at a grocery store on Madison for cigarettes and change.

She was surprised to see so many people on the street when she would be in bed.

Daisy Summerfield's Art

She felt fresh and neat, not drained and soiled as usual after a social event.

She put the cigarettes and matchbook into the hole in her left sleeve.

She had remembered that the flags hanging from the wrists were pockets.

As the bus went through Central Park and turned down Columbus Avenue, the word acetone entered her mind.

She could have smelled it at the party.

The bus turned right. After two more avenue blocks Daisy stepped down to Broadway.

•

She woke up the next morning wondering why she was thinking of the solvent.

“Well-dried tempera paintings may usually be cleaned with a little acetone,” Ralph Mayer said in *The Artists Handbook of Materials and Techniques*.

The Sung Vase

She looked in the index of Hilaire Hiler's *Notes on the Technique of Painting*, but acetone wasn't in there.

Daisy trusted her subconscious.

She didn't judge her work. She said who are you? What are you saying? How can I help you?

Sometimes she had to work fast, changing tools blindly, using them instinctively.

She said the hardest part of being an artist was looking at your work and trying to understand it.

•

"The party was great!"

"How did you like the show?"

"It was great. Daphne, do you know a woman named Paige Williams?"

"I went to college with her."

"You aren't friends with her!"

"We're friendly."

"Did you invite her?"

Daisy Summerfield's Art

“No, but I’m glad she came. She’s a painter.”

“Is she any good?”

“I don’t know.”

“Does she have a gallery?”

“No.”

“I’d like to see her work.”

“She’ll be thrilled!”

“Make a date, but don’t tell her I’m coming.”

“Why?”

“She’d be nervous.”

•

Daisy took the IRT down to 42nd Street, went to the 40th Street end of the platform, climbed the stairs, turned right, and followed the S to the shuttle.

At Grand Central she walked with the herd to the 4, 5, and 6 lines downstairs.

The Sung Vase

All trains on both sides of the platform stopped at 14th Street, so a few minutes later she put her book back in her bag and went up to Union Square.

In the antiques section she found *The Blue-China Book* by Ada Walker Camehl, published in 1916.

It had a tear on the dust jacket, but the case and pages were like new.

She found *Ancestors' Brocades* by Millicent Todd Bingham in the literature section.

She loved the Strand but couldn't stay long.

There were too many books and too many gray book lovers fingering through them.

Occasionally a melancholy voice would call, "Books to go down, please. Books to go down."

She opened *Ancestors' Brocades* on the train home and read it with a passion that surprised her.

Daisy Summerfield's Art

When she came to, “Any tradition which pictures [Lavinia Dickinson] a mild, sweet New England spinster will be dissipated, I think, during the course of this narrative, she laughed wildly.

Sometimes, she would open the door into the dining-room, windows always shut, inner blinds so nearly closed that the pattern of the dark-blue china on the sideboard could hardly be distinguished—the design an old-fashioned ship in a strange harbor, called ‘The Landing of Lafayette.’

Daisy had a “Landing of Lafayette” plate.

She had seen it in a shop window and thought the sails were lanterns.

•

At the flea market she got a tiny green plastic dog charm.

She saw a blue-and-white teapot printed with seashells, her favorite motif.

The Sung Vase

Inside she found the handle and two dried-out dusty old tubes of paint.

These dealers were a mess. Everything they had was broken and useless.

But she had bought good things from this creased and swarthy toothless couple.

The spout was chipped in an attractive way.

The woman came over to her and said, "I gotta get fifty for the teapot."

"Do you have the lid?"

"Not if you don't see it."

Daisy put it back.

"Give me forty.

"I collect china," she said, caressing Daisy's bills. "We're bringing bring more next week."

Holding the teapot in a dirty brown bag, Daisy stayed near the entrance to the market.

Daisy Summerfield's Art

She put her bag on the ground, leaned against the fence, and opened *Ancestors' Brocades*.

'Ran over to Vinnie's . . .' Referring to this visit on the second day after her return, my mother told me that Miss Vinnie seemed just as usual, receiving her with acclaim and high enthusiasm over her gift of some blue china from Japan.

"Hi," she said, starting forward. "Do you have time for coffee?"

"You taking me?" Detective Taig asked as they walked down Sixth Avenue.

He offered to carry the bag, but she refused.

•

They sat in a booth and she said, "When I was in high school I wanted to be a movie star."

"Okay."

"My name was going to be Patricia de la Hunt.

The Sung Vase

“Do you think I should write murder mysteries under the name Patricia de la Corpse?”

“No,” he said. “You have good instincts.”

She sipped her coffee.

“The police are an arm of the law. We don’t work creatively.”

“Can’t you look into it?”

“No.”

“I used to think finding an object could change my life.”

“You’ve mentioned that.”

“You’re happy before you buy something and your money is still your own.

“You pay for it and leave the shop—a star. Then you get home and unwrap it.

“You look in the mirror and your eyes look scared. You have less money.”

“Are you busy next Saturday?”

“Yes,” she said, and was sorry.

Daisy Summerfield's Art

But as she descended the subway steps spotted with blackened gum, she was fuming.

He refused to check the liquor bottle for paint thinner.

•

During the worst part of rush hour Daisy took a cross town bus to meet Daphne.

They got a cab to 95th and Third Avenue, and Daphne paid the driver.

A small self-service elevator took them up.

Paige opened the door wearing a black and gold kimono. She kissed Daphne.

"I brought Daisy Summerfield," Daphne said, and Daisy entered with them.

She saw a shawl draped over a bamboo table and thought the Sung vase might have stood there.

She peered down, looking for a round indent mark.

Above the tweed sofa hung two dingy abstracts. "Are those yours?" she asked.

The Sung Vase

“Yes.” Paige stood back to admire them. “They’re about paint.”

About wrecking it, thought Daisy.

“You’re so prolific!” Daphne exclaimed, as they entered Paige’s studio.

“I’m very driven.” She turned some canvases around.

“You’re like Cézanne,” Daisy said.

His walls had looked gray when she stood in his modern studio in the hills outside Aix-en-Provence but were green on the postcard she bought there.

On the way back to the living room, Daphne hissed, “Are you crazy?”

Paige served them drinks.

Daisy set hers down.

She reached out again, saying in an English accent, “I will chawnce a nut.

“This reminds me of a time my family was watching *Masterpiece Theater*.

Daisy Summerfield's Art

“We knew the chocolates were poisoned, so when the killer said, have a delicious bonbon, I screamed, NO!

“Did I ever tell you that?” she asked Daphne. “That was a big joke in our family.

“Have a delicious bonbon.”

“This is a great apartment,” Daphne said.

Daisy took a plastic bag from her pocket, put her hand inside it, picked up her drink, and closed the bag over it, saying, “Maybe I’ll drink this later.”

She shrugged. “You introduce two old friends to each other. They’re jealous and behave badly.”

She got up.

“We have to go.”

She turned the lock, opened the door, motioned to Daphne, and pushed her out.

“What’s wrong with you?” Daphne cried.

The elevator came and they rode down.

The Sung Vase

As they got out, Daisy said, “She uses acetone and she has a copy of *Artist Beware!*”

They opened the door and were back on 95th Street. Daisy hailed a cab.

The driver waited to hear their destination.

“Should I come to your place?” Daisy asked.

The Kodalys lived on the Upper East Side. They would go there first, anyway.

Daisy leaned forward. “Eighty-third and Park, and I’ll tell you if I’m going on.”

“Yes!” Daphne said. “Come over.”

The cab turned south on Park Avenue, hurling them into Daisy’s corner.

She took something from her pocket.

The taxi stopped at a light and Daphne saw it was one of Daisy’s mallets.

Their heads hit the ceiling as a tire went into a pothole.

Daisy Summerfield's Art

“Thank God we’re only going to your place,” Daisy said. “I hope this glass is okay.”

“We just passed my street.”

Daisy risked leaning forward and told the driver, “We’ll get out here.”

She handed him money and they crossed Park Avenue and walked back uptown.

There were tall broad buildings pierced with yellow light as far as the eye could see.

“It’s so good to see you!” Daphne’s doorman greeted Daisy.

The wizened old elevator man took them up to the Kodaly’s vestibule.

“Thanks, Rodney.”

“Thanks,” echoed Daisy.

Alan kissed them. “Were you girls drinking?”

“I must reek!”

Daisy went to the downstairs bathroom.

The Sung Vase

“She’s insane,” she heard as she bent over the sink and examined the liquor glass.

“Do you have Baggies?” she asked Alan.

She followed him to the kitchen, saying, “I saw a wino die a horrible death.

“Are you sure I don’t smell?”

She came into the living room and sank down on the white sofa to the left of the fireplace.

This room contained Daisy’s first woodcarving, *The Niece of Mademoiselle Pogany*.

She’d had it made into a lamp with a pink silk shade and given it to Daphne and Alan.

The only other art was a black painting by Ad Reinhardt over the mantel.

When Daisy saw her old sculpture, she remembered crawling on the floor of her room at the Buxton Hotel for Women, picking up wood chips.

Daisy Summerfield's Art

Daphne had taken Alan to see her work in one of the cozy parlors on the mezzanine.

The pink silk shade glowed with these memories as the three friends sat talking.

•

Daisy, bathed in blue light, was watching *The Doubleday Game*.

The seashell motif teapot, clean and mended, stood on a nearby sculpture stand.

The show ended, and her phone rang.

“Do authors really rearrange the shelves?”

“That’s how they got the idea!”

“I wanted to see if you were watching. Alan wants to talk to you.”

He asked, “Do you really believe Paige Williams murdered someone?”

“A vagrant,” she said.

“Why did she ask him to sell a vase for her?”

The Sung Vase

“I think she bought it from Osmond Fox but couldn’t afford it and was embarrassed to return it, so she got rid of it and told the insurance company it was stolen.”

“They’d investigate,” he surprised her by saying.

“Insurance fraud is a serious crime. If she isn’t convicted, she won’t get the money, she’ll get the vase.”

•

Daisy came home with another plastic charm—a white bulldog on a purple cord.

She put in the poet’s box and read,

Down, down he sank
to the bottom
of the green lake
Minnetonka,
a turtle carved
from opal rock.

Daisy Summerfield's Art

She turned the page.

Here are the small
colored bits of my soul.

Wait, I'll toss them at you
like confetti!

Lake Minnetonka was where she was from! She thought, I never go
to galleries. I buy books.

She would type up the poems and write an introduction to them.

Instead of saying they were by an unknown poet, she would give
her a name.

She had a small plastic box of loose tintypes.

The images taken by a multi-lens camera had been cut apart with tin
snips.

Two were of a young woman in a black straw hat who was smiling.

The Sung Vase

That was rare, though as Beaumont Newhall said in *The History of Photography*, tintypes were cheap and casual and characteristic of a kind of folk art.

Daisy liked the little ones, three fourths of an inch by one inch, and under.

She could measure hers and find out from *A Century of Cameras* by Eaton S. Lothrop, Jr. if they were taken by the Lancaster, the New Gem, the Nodark, the Operateur, the Quta, or the Wing.

She also had *Minnetonka Story* by Blanche Wilson, *Once upon a Lake* by Thelma Jones, *The Saga of Saga Hill* by Theodore C. Blegen, and *Mileposts on the Prairie: The Story of the Minneapolis & St. Louis Railway*, by Frank P. Donovan, Jr.

The lake and the Big Woods had been discovered by white men in 1822.

By the late 1800s it was a summer resort for southerners.

The cardboard box Moe gave Daisy might have traveled in a trunk from Minnesota.

Daisy Summerfield's Art

Along with the poetry notebook, the box contained relics of the poet's life.

The bulldog charm would be as fascinating to her readers as the topaz crosses Jane Austen's sailor brother, Charles, bought his sisters with his share of prize money.

There was a romance.

Daisy auditioned male tintypes.

"I'm going to buy a typewriter," she told her favorite elevator man, Modesto.

"If someone comes to see me, will you ask him to wait?"

Walking over to Amsterdam, she looked back and saw Paige Williams enter her building.

After a while she saw her leave.

•

"You missed your friend," said Modesto.

"She's not my friend! She killed someone!"

"If she comes back, will you stay outside my door? I want to make her confess."

The Sung Vase

She got her cordless phone and gave it to him.

Her doorbell rang, and she looked out the peephole at Paige.

“In murder mysteries”—Daisy heard her hayseed voice as if on tape—“the murderer confesses.”

“You haven’t worked in years, and you’re committing suicide.”

Paige pulled her across the room.

“STOP! STOP!” Daisy yelled.

“Don’t you have cuff links? Lucky I have a cordless,” she babbled to a woman officer.

The first time she saw a woman officer, she threw down her dish towel and ran downstairs to congratulate her.

Taig came in looking frantic. He had heard her address on his scanner.

“You okay?” he asked coolly.

She opened her tool chest, got the liquor glass and bottle, and told an officer to hold them upright.

•

Daisy Summerfield's Art

At Kate's, next door to Parsons School of Design, she bought *The Artist's Complete Health and Safety Guide*.

She got on an uptown express and opened the book. The train stopped and she saw a local across the platform.

She ran out and got on a downtown express. Acetone was highly flammable but "least toxic in the class."

She looked at other solvents, speeding in the wrong direction.

"Do not use. Cancer agent. Severe liver damage and death result when combined with alcohol. Skin absorbs," said the comment on carbon tetrachloride.

"Lethal when combined with alcohol."

•

"Hi," Moe greeted her.

"Hi." Looking down, she saw a shallow bowl, a Chinese export saucer from the mid to late 1700s.

In a lozenge in the lower center were large airy gold initials.

The Sung Vase

Above it two clasped hands were outlined in gold, and above them two bistre and white doves with red beaks and feet stood facing each other on a rolled up marriage contract.

The lozenge had a festoon of tiny magenta and red flowers, green leaves, and a magenta ribbon.

The saucer was mended. She showed Moe the rivets.

“Ah, it’s broken,” he said. “I didn’t see that.”

“But the way it’s fixed is great.”

“You know what that is?”

“I just like the staples.” Thick and black, they had rusted into the translucent body.

She would have to accept it as a token of his thanks. In fact, she would love it.

“How much is it?”

“Twenty to you.”

“You’ve got to be kidding,” she said, her face numb with shock.

But he had given her the box with *Voluta musica* and the poems, so she paid and started to leave.

Daisy Summerfield's Art

"Wait," he said. "What did you take from me that day?"

"Half a cardboard box."

"There was something in there."

"Junk!"

"Gimme twelve dollars."

"It was on your dollar table!"

"It shouldn't have been there. You can bring it back next week. You know I'll let you do that.

"That book of writing—that's what the people want. I'm out here to make money," he called after her.

“Alan,” said Daphne, “We never got Daisy a fiftieth birthday present.”

“Does she want one?” he asked.

“Did I want these?”

She pushed together the clasp on her pearls.

“Do you want to give them to Daisy?” His dark eyes looked worried as he knotted his tie.

“No, I love them!”

“Should we get her pearls?”

On this sweet spring morning in the beautiful New York light that had impressed Matisse, the idea of casting pearls before swine came and went.

“I was angry when she stopped carving. I thought she was disloyal to you.”

Alan stopped collecting the things from his bureau top.

“She never made those porcelain sculptures she talked about.”

Daisy Summerfield's Art

"I guess they weren't compelling."

"I want to get her something at James Rose."

"His prices start at two thousand dollars!"

"We get a discount."

"Only twenty percent!"

"I could go there after class and see if they have something wonderful."

He kissed her smooth auburn hair and said, "I think it's a great idea."

"I have a problem with a tutee," she began, holding up a diamond earring.

But he had an early meeting at the gallery.

•

"Hello, Jim," Daphne said as she walked in to James Rose Antique China.

"Daphne!"

"Hello, Leon."

The Pink Confucius

Her smile widened. Daisy had said she wanted to marry him because of her interest in old china.

“I came to get a present.”

“We’re honored,” said James Rose.

“It’s for Daisy Summerfield.”

The two large men shrank back.

“We want to get her something special, something that has mystery.”

“She likes early English pottery,” Leon said.

He showed her the cabinet full of bright colored earthenware teapots.

Near it a low vitrine displayed small green-and-cream objects.

Daphne put her briefcase on the floor. She could see why Daisy liked these things.

One teapot had four feet. Another had a dog for a knob. Another was a kneeling camel.

“She showed you a cup she found.”

“Yes.”

Daisy Summerfield's Art

“Was it the one that was stolen?”

“It might have been.”

She was thrilled. “Would you—”

He shook his head.

A letter from him saying Daisy owned the Elers cup would have been the best gift.

“Do you have something comparable? Is there a teapot to go with it?”

The two men laughed and expanded.

The buzzer sounded and a tall gray-haired man entered.

Leon went over to him.

James Rose opened the glass cabinet and took out a small white teapot.

He handed it to Daphne, saying, “This is Astbury. Joshua Astbury pretended to be an idiot so the Elerses would hire him. Then he learned their secrets!”

“How much is it?”

He removed the lid.

The Pink Confucius

“Four thousand.”

“Do you have something hidden away that she would be very excited to own?”

She dismissed the Astbury teapot and everything else on display.

“Maybe you are psychic, Daphne. There is something we’ve been researching.”

He replaced the teapot.

“It isn’t as old as Elers or Astbury, but it is eighteenth-century.”

He led her to the back of the shop, saying, “Sit down and I’ll bring it to you.”

The tall gray-haired man was looking in one of the cases along the wall.

His clothes were shabby, but that didn’t mean a thing. On the contrary, she thought.

James Rose returned carrying a pink-and-white chinoiserie figure.

The look on Leon’s face made Daphne want to buy it.

It wasn’t on display. They were researching it. She thought Daisy would love it.

Daisy Summerfield's Art

"How much is it?" she asked.

James Rose answered in a very low voice, "If we could prove it's Guyon or St. Cloud . . ."

Daphne smiled, hearing Daisy say *San Clou*.

". . . the sky would be the limit. But I think it's more than you want to spend."

"How much is it?"

He made his voice even lower. "A hundred."

"Twenty percent off would make it eighty."

"I can make it sixty."

Daisy's sculptures sold for two hundred thousand dollars.

The tall gray-haired man left the shop, and Leon sat down with Daphne.

"How much?" he asked.

"Sixty."

"That's great!"

"Alan will think I'm crazy, and I'll come back and get the teapot."

The Pink Confucius

“This is better than the teapot. If we could authenticate it, it would go to a museum.”

“I want a copy of your research.”

“Guyon,” he said. “Guyon or—”

“But we don’t guarantee it.” James Rose returned with a nicely sealed carton.

“Understood.”

He walked her to the door, saying, “I hope your friend likes it.”

“Let’s see what Alan says.”

Carrying the small carton she went down the block. “Give it to me,” the shabby man said at the corner.

•

Daisy came home and saw the light on her answering machine blinking.

She pressed Rewind.

Then she carefully opened a stapled bag from New York Central, preserving the receipt.

Daisy Summerfield's Art

“Daisy, Daphne was hurt. She was hurt very badly.” The speaker seemed to be laughing!

“Daisy, Daphne is hurt. We're at Mount Sinai. I'm not sure where.”

She heard the same high-pitched laughter.

“Daisy, call me at Mount Sinai. Ask for Daphne's room. I can't see the extension.”

“Daisy, call me here as soon as you get this.

“Daphne's unconscious.”

She put down the paint tubes. Her bag was still on her shoulder. She thought, This can't be real.

“TAX-EE!”

“Mount Sinai Hospital,” she told the driver, praying he knew how to go through the park.

“Are you hurt?”

“No.”

If she were bleeding, he would make her get out.

•

The Pink Confucius

“Hi, D. You look pretty. We’re at Mount Sinai. It’s spring and the air is soft.

“There are buds on all the trees. When you wake up, we can go to the park.

“Remember the cherry blossoms last year? I can’t wait to see them again.”

She saw Alan in the doorway.

“Alan’s back. Tell her where we live and what we do, so she can find us,” she told him.

“Once when I was falling asleep, I saw a blue shape.

“It was my spirit trying to come back, but it was at the wrong window!”

Come out here for a minute,” Alan said, and introduced her to Detective Mike Angeli.

“Michael Angeli?”

Alan put his hand on her shoulder and they went to the smoking room at the end of the corridor and sat down.

Daisy Summerfield's Art

Mike was short and stocky. He rested his notebook on his raised thigh.

Daisy wondered what was in it.

“Wasn’t it an accident?” she asked.

“The people who called the ambulance saw a man take something from your wife.”

“You have all her things,” Daisy said to Alan.

He stammered, “A-all I know is, she taught at Chubb Institute this morning.”

“Any problem there?”

“She teaches a graduate seminar in art history.”

“She’s been teaching it for twenty years,” Daisy said.

“What time was that?”

“From nine to twelve.”

“Then she has office hours,” Daisy added.

“Does she have family?” Mike asked Alan.

“Her mother’s in a nursing home, and her brother lives in California,” Daisy answered for him.

The Pink Confucius

“I need their names and addresses.”

“She works at the gallery too.”

“Your gallery?” Mike asked Alan.

“We have a little trouble there. A European firm wants to buy us.”

“You want to sell?”

“What?” cried Daisy.

“No,” he said.

“Would they hurt your wife?”

“No.”

“Where did it happen?” asked Daisy.

“The northeast corner of Madison and Eightieth,” Detective Angeli said.

“Chubb is at Sixty-second and the East River. The gallery is at Seventy-ninth,” Daisy commented.

“What difference does it make?” Alan said, getting up. “I’m going back to her room.”

•

Daisy Summerfield's Art

"I'm calling about Daphne Kodaly," Daisy said over the phone at five a.m.

"Are you a relative?"

"Yes."

"Is this Daisy?"

"Yes!"

"This is Trudy. She's the same."

"Is that okay?"

"She's stable. Her CT and MRI were good. Her vital signs are good. There's no sign of internal bleeding."

"That's great!"

"We don't want her to stay this way *too* long. They'll try to get her up soon."

"Could she be scared to wake up?"

"That's possible."

"Why do you say *they*'ll try to get her up? I think she'd respond to you."

"I don't really work here."

The Pink Confucius

•

Daphne's condition hadn't changed by Saturday night.

Sunday morning the news was the same.

"What are you doing today?" asked Alan.

Daisy started to say she was going to paint a series based on the sentence "Palm seeds can be hard to find."

"I'll call you if there's any change," he said.

•

Daphne's room was filled with flowers.

There were waves of daffodils, "architectural" tulips, and Monet irises.

A plain glass tumbler of pansies was a quote from a Matisse at the Met.

Daisy loved that, and a clean old Higgins ink bottle holding a tiny bunch of violets.

Magnolia, forsythia, and dogwood branches leaned against clear glass walls, like Van Goghs.

"Is it all right for her to have these?" she asked the nurse.

Daisy Summerfield's Art

"She isn't allergic."

"No, and the scents should make her happy.

"You should see your flowers," she told Daphne.

"Guess what!

"A young man at New York Central told me I could use wallpaper paste as a ground for painting.

"I bought watercolor blocks.

"Canvas never appealed to me.

"The paste is made from vegetables and it's reversible.

"Guess how much it cost.

"Two dollars.

"I primed a paper on one block, and it dried flat. I used a palette knife to remove it."

•

Daphne's mind went down different highways and byways.

One was a curving climbing highway with black-and-white guard rails on the left.

The Pink Confucius

She entered a bathroom with hundreds of stalls. At last she found one she could use.

She entered a restroom where she could sit.

She was on a top floor of a department store.

To go down she had to use chutes, changing in midair from one to another.

She saw Daisy on the mezzanine and wondered how Daisy got there.

She was packed into a chute with other people who were going on a plane.

She went down one of three roads that led to a river.

She went down another of the roads.

She and some girls were sledding on one of the roads.

They came to a highway.

How do I sled all the way to the roadhouse, she worried.

She saw Daisy pick up her sled.

“You can carry your sled,” Daisy told her.

Daisy Summerfield's Art

She heard Daisy talk about painting. "I said you should paint," she thought she said.

"Daisy's painting," she thought she told Alan.

She saw one of her grandmothers and her old dog, Tubby, and her old cats, Gloria and Lulu.

She saw two elms she had known as a child, and the robin who teased Tubby in New Jersey.

•

When Daisy left the hospital on Monday, her head ached and she felt drugged.

So today she started at the beautiful small campus on the East River.

The people under the flowering trees in the gardens looked like harmless intellectuals and she felt it would be rude to break in on their thoughts.

She sat down on a bench and thought about applying to graduate school there.

The Pink Confucius

“Excuse me,” she said, rising, “can you tell me how to get to Daphne Kodaly’s office?”

“Certainly. But she’s not there.”

The woman gave her directions to a building Daisy could have found in her sleep.

“I’m Professor Brown. She has the office next to mine.”

As Daisy wondered what else to ask, Professor Brown walked away.

Everyone knows universities are political, Daisy thought, sitting back down.

No one seems to care that they’re big money-making corporations.

A thin young man came along, a bang of straight dark hair on his forehead.

“Takes care of her,” Daisy heard him say, and stiffly rose from the bench.

“Takes care of whom?” she asked humorously.

“Rosenstern.”

“Not Kodaly?”

Daisy Summerfield's Art

“No way! I couldn't get my thesis accepted without her!”

“What's your name? I'll tell her.”

“James Ray.” He held out a shaky white hand.

•

When Daisy arrived at the hospital she was told it was too early to see Daphne.

She decided to walk down to 80th Street and go around the corner to Madison.

The shops wouldn't open till ten or eleven, but she could eat at the Camilla and question Oscar, the waiter.

A beautiful man coming toward her was waving at someone behind her.

“Let's get some coffee,” Alan said.

Now she would learn which European gallery wanted to buy the Kodaly.

They crossed Madison and she started to turn downtown.

He turned uptown.

The Pink Confucius

“I go to Carolina,” he said as they passed James Rose Antique China.

“They don’t know me here.”

She picked up her cup and remarked, “All the coffee shops have women’s names.”

“Really?”

“Camilla. Carolina. And the one near the flea market is called Fritzie.”

“I wonder why.”

“Mine’s Argo.”

She leaned forward. “Daphne’s not just your wife, you know. She’s my best friend.”

“Why have you been so distant lately?”

“We had dinner on my birthday.” She burst out laughing.

”That was fun.”

He smiled at her.

“I didn’t want you to know I stopped carving.”

Daisy Summerfield's Art

“You must know what you’re doing. You don’t have to make art if you don’t want to.”

“I thought you cared about my work.”

“You know I do.”

Longing to hear that he cherished her, she found his words cold. Daphne would have known what to say.

She said, “I’ll find out who did this.”

“Let the police do their work.”

“They don’t care as much as I do.”

“They’re professionals.”

“That doesn’t mean they’re good! Things come to me because I care!”

“I believe you’re a great artist,” he said, and her pain eased and she leaned back.

“But making sculpture and solving crimes are two different things.”

“They’re not! I think if we find the person who hurt Daphne, she’ll wake up.”

The Pink Confucius

“Don’t be scared, Alan. She feels it! What do doctors know? Gutman’s in terrible shape.

“If I were a doctor, I wouldn’t charge more than I had to, and I’d tell my patients I was learning.

“I’d talk with them until they wanted to leave and I’d get to the root of their problems.

“I’d have a modest office, no one would sue me, others would copy me . . .”

A waiter brought more coffee.

He poured from on high and Daisy got lots of tiny bubbles representing money.

She dipped her spoon, caught as many as she could, and swallowed them.

“I asked a nurse if Daphne was scared to wake up. She said she might be.”

“That may be true,” Alan said.

“Don’t you think I’d be a good diagnostician?”

“Yes.”

Daisy Summerfield's Art

"We need a good detective."

"But not you."

"Degas said making art was like committing a crime."

"Really?"

"Where are you going?"

"To the hospital."

He left without paying.

Daisy threw down money and ran after him.

He was in the next block.

"She'll be fine," she said.

"Are you sure? Because I believe in you."

•

She walked over to the museum and bought a pretzel from a refreshment cart.

Could happiness make junk food nutritious, she wondered as someone sat down near her on a step.

"What were you researching?" she asked the young Kodaly Gallery curator.

The Pink Confucius

“Homer.”

“Is it the ‘parboiled’ man?”

“No, but come and see it.”

“I will. I love American art. It’s not twisty.

“If Daphne got something at the coffee shop, why would she go up to Eightieth Street?” Daisy asked.

“I’m sure you’ll find out.”

“Alan doesn’t want me to.”

“Why not?” Melanie said. “It’s part of your art.”

“Really?”

“You carve Witnesses.”

“That’s brilliant!”

“Maybe I should write your next catalog.”

•

Alan answered the phone in Daphne’s room.

“Who wants to buy the gallery?” asked Daisy.

“Wolfsheim.”

“Are they really after you?”

Daisy Summerfield's Art

"No. They just made a good offer."

Daisy felt water rush into her head. "What would you do without the gallery?"

"I'm keeping it."

"Are they angry?"

"No."

"Where do they stay?"

"Where do they stay?"

"Is there a hotel where they stay? If someone wanted to see them, where would they be?"

"I don't know," he said. "They could be anywhere."

•

"Melanie?"

"Hi, Daisy!"

"Can you tell me who's in town from Wolfsheim and where he or she is staying?"

"John de Carville. He's at the Regency."

"Thanks!"

The Pink Confucius

•

Daisy refused to leave a message for Mr. de Carville.

When at last she reached him, he invited her to lunch at a “mahvelous” small restaurant in the lower East Fifties.

•

She pinned a crumpled pink silk rose to where the sagging neck of her black cardigan made a V.

Delighted with this ensemble, she stepped into low-heeled black pumps, from Agnès B.

“I’m meeting Mr. de Carville,” she told the maître d’.

He took her to a round table covered by a floor-length multicolor paisley pattern cloth, and pulled out a chair upholstered in a different pattern.

She had to propel the chair over the carpet to a more comfortable position.

The polyester cloth tangled with her jeans when she tried to cross her legs.

Daisy Summerfield's Art

Multicolor curtains in yet another paisley pattern covered walls and windows.

It looked like Kenneth's Hair Salon before they moved to the Waldorf.

A waiter came to take her drink order.

She asked for a Vittel.

"We don't have Vittel water."

"I heard it was available in the States."

The tall dark-eyed man coming toward her had a narrow head and slicked-back hair.

His shirt was so crisp, his tie so thick, his tan so brown, his cuff links so golden, she nearly stood to greet him.

"This is a great honor," he said.

"Have you eaten here before?" He pressed the tie to his chest and sat down.

"The food is mahvelous."

"Good. I'm starving."

He threw back his head and laughed.

The Pink Confucius

There was ice in Daisy's glass.

"No ice," she told the waiter.

"The water's not chilled."

John de Carville ordered scotch.

"Americans," he said scathingly. "You must spend most of your time in Europe."

"No. I just have common sense."

"That's rare for an artist."

She wondered if he were drunk.

She said, "We work with materials. We do things no one has ever done and see them through!"

"But about practical matters . . ."

"Those are practical matters. If it doesn't work—"

"You blame the assistant."

"I'm talking about real artists."

"But in money and everyday matters?"

"We may hate it, but we do it."

Daisy Summerfield's Art

Looking at the menu while he ordered another scotch, she said, "I've solved some crimes."

He took a sip of his new drink and said he loved visiting New York because he had a car and driver.

Then he asked, "Wasn't it Epstein who said an artist is not only a dreamer but practical as well?"

She considered falling in love with him. She could have a life like Daphne's, only in Europe.

There were three entrées: meat, chicken, and fish.

She asked for a salad.

"All the entrées come with salads."

"I'd like one for lunch."

"The chef is too busy to prepare one."

"Then bring me bread and a side salad."

She drank her warm Evian while John de Carville tasted his third drink.

"There are good artists who have assistants," Daisy admitted as their food arrived.

The Pink Confucius

He barely glanced at his.

“You aren’t French,” she observed.

“Swiss.”

“In France, even couples who are kissing pay attention when their food is served.”

“You like human nature.”

“No I don’t!”

She thanked the waiter for a small dish of green beans.

“You are one of the prizes we would win if we bought the Kodaly,”

John de Carville said.

“Alan isn’t selling.”

“Perhaps we can convince him.”

“Why don’t you just open a New York Gallery?”

“Would you leave the Kodaly and come to us?”

“No.”

Again he threw back his head and laughed. “You tell it like it is, baby!”

Daisy Summerfield's Art

The bread was good. Daisy put salad on it and held it down with her fingers.

She removed an olive pit from her mouth and said, "The Kodaly's not the only good gallery."

"We're having a look at others. Dessert?"

"I'd love some chocolate."

When her cake came, he leaned across the table and took off the tip with his fork.

Renoir would have called him a cad.

•

In the third row of booths in the lower half of the antiques lot, Daisy saw some ceramic figures.

The blanc de chine Kuan Yin wasn't old, and both hands were missing.

The polychrome Immortal wasn't stamped "China," but it wasn't old either.

She felt she would find something there.

The Pink Confucius

There was a seated Oriental figure with Caucasian features and a thin crackled glaze.

She picked it up, turned it over, and found a small white chip in the grayish white base.

Porcelain is fused, not grainy. If she touched her tongue to it, it would pull at her saliva.

“How much is this?” she asked the dealer.

“One fifty. It’s Chinese.”

“No it’s not!”

“One thirty.”

She set it down but didn’t leave.

The dealer was foreign. She didn’t know how to get him to lower the price.

When they were alone, she asked, “What’s the lowest price you can take?”

“One twenty.”

“I don’t have that much.”

Daisy Summerfield's Art

She set the figure down and picked it up whenever someone came near.

“Can you make it fifty?”

“A hundred.”

“I wish I could. I would pay a hundred dollars to go home.”

“Go home!”

“I can't! I love this!”

“You love it? How much you can pay?”

“Fifty.”

“You're not dealer.”

“No, I'm not a dealer!”

“If you were dealer, I charge hundred thousand.

“A dealer say something worth hundred thousand, but that's not what he paid.”

“I know!”

“You're okay. Sometimes customer is no good. He says give me for fifty, or I drop it.”

“That's terrible!”

The Pink Confucius

“Give me sixty.”

“Thanks! Let’s see if I have it.”

•

She took the figure to her kitchen, adjusted the taps to the warmth of summer rain, placed it on a towel, and washed it with soap and a soft toothbrush.

The brush stayed surprisingly clean.

She dried the figure, took it to her desk, and examined it through her loupe.

She slid specks of pink paint off the glaze and gently scratched it out of the unglazed channels with a razor.

She took it back to the sink and washed it again, holding it upright so no water would get in the hole in the base.

Then she opened *Teapots and Tea* by Frank Tilley and found the Chinamen teapots.

When this famous and, in fact, almost fabulous Teapot (No.55) was sold in 1938 at the dispersal of the Wallace

Daisy Summerfield's Art

Elliot Collection, it was described as probably having for its prototype “a Ting yao piece of the Sung Dynasty”. White “Ting yao” is known with moulded or raised ornament (yin hua) and this may have been the basis for the suggestion in the sale catalogue, but Honey, O.E.P., p. 45, suggests that the paste and modelling of these Chinaman Teapots may stem from Gouyn or someone previously at St. Cloud. This curious form, and a variation in which the man is holding a bird with spread wings (No. 54) are in the same Collection and both are illustrated. Here a laughing man squats and holds a parrot which forms the spout. The twisted branch handle of No. 55 has moulded flower and leaf ornament springing from its top end, and both Covers, in the shape of the man's hat, have a knop formed of fruits and leaves. So far no coloured version of these has been recorded. Marks: an incised triangle. Circa 1745. Height: 7”.

(M.G. Kaufman Collection, Chicago, U.S.A.)

The Pink Confucius

Daisy measured hers: seven inches.

His pink robe and hat with two long streamers had an impressed pattern.

Nothing was on the base.

At the bottom of his robe a tiny number, 10156, was inscribed under the glaze.

It was the hands that compelled her to stay at the booth and get a good price.

His bare arm and hand holding a scepter made her think of ancient sculptures or broken seashells imbedded in sand.

She couldn't find "Gouyn" in her books.

Too late she learned that scholars keep even the worst books for any crumbs they might contain.

At last she found "Gouyn, Charles" in the index of *The Practical Book of China*:

What we believe to be likely is that the factory was established by or, at least, managed by one Charles Gouyn,

Daisy Summerfield's Art

who is said to have been either a Fleming or a Frenchman, and that his skilled workmen came from France and Germany. Gouyn's identity and personality are largely conjectural. In his exhaustive book on Chelsea china, William King points out that "the strong resemblance between early Chelsea porcelain and that produced by the French soft paste factories renders it highly possible that Chelsea was started by some refugee from St. Cloud, Chantilly or Mennency, and if this be so, Gouyn may well have been the individual in question."

•

"Daphne got you a present," Alan said.

"It was for your fiftieth birthday. She got it at James Rose. It was an eighteenth-century Confucius."

"When did she get it?" asked Daisy. "I'm fifty-one."

"I'll read you the description: 'Seated figure in pink hat and pink robe, holding lotus blossom and scepter, all underglaze.'

The Pink Confucius

“Gray markings on face and beard, also underglaze. Possibly Chantilly, St. Cloud, or Gouyn.’

“I forgot she said she was going there after class!”

“You were in shock. I can’t believe she got me something at James Rose!”

“Come and see her.”

“I’m there all the time!”

They hung up.

Her doorbell rang and she went down the hall and looked through the peephole.

“Who is it?” she called.

“Detective Angeli.”

“Are you just moving in?” he asked. “Or did you get rid of something?”

“Why are you here?”

“I was talking to Alan Kodaly.”

“It’s Ko-dye.”

Daisy Summerfield's Art

Mike looked like he wanted to kick the cardboard chest the Confucius was on.

She went over to her steel bookcase, saying, "This is one of my sculptures."

"How did you make that?"

"I carved it."

"Would you like some tea? Come here," she called, running water into her kettle. "Sit down."

Mike pulled out a chair and sat down at the round white metal table.

She took two mugs from one cupboard, went to another, took out a box of tea bags, opened it, found she had several, and put one in each mug.

As she waited for the water she chose a saucer for their used tea bags.

"It's from the flea market," she said. "I go to the one on Twenty-sixth Street. It's the best."

The Pink Confucius

She smiled at the way he lifted his mug in both hands and sipped from it.

She was going to take the Confucius to James Rose and see if he sold it to Daphne.

But an artist's life is lonely, and Mike's visit was fun, like pretending to drink tea from acorn cups with the young Jackson Pollock.

•

Daisy called Detective Taig. "You know the Kodaly Gallery, don't you?"

"I think so," he said.

"Daphne Kodaly was mugged. She's in a coma."

"I'm sorry."

"I know you know her and Alan. Your parents own two of my sculptures."

"I didn't know that."

"Daphne got me a present at James Rose Antique China, and I bought it at the flea market.

Daisy Summerfield's Art

“Alan read me the description, and the detective came to my door!”

“Why didn't you give it to him?” Taig asked.

•

“You think Alan fell in love with you because of your clothes,” Daisy said. “Did you belong to the TAB Book Club when you were in seventh or eighth grade?”

“There was a story in one of the books I bought, called ‘The Date Catcher.’

“A high school girl goes to a department store on an errand.

“She sees a basket of barrettes on a counter. A sign says they're Date Catchers. They're all different colors.

“The saleslady chooses one and tells her to try it. It looks great on her and she impulsively buys it.

“She decides to get a Coke at the Sweet Shop where all the kids hang out.

“She's poor and has to work after school.

The Pink Confucius

“A popular boy is sitting alone at the counter. He just had a fight with his girlfriend.

“He and this girl talk, and he invites her to a dance called the Harvest Festival.

“He pays for her Coke when he leaves.

“She puts up her hand to touch the Date Catcher—just to reassure herself—and it isn’t there.”

“Ugh,” said Daphne.

Her eyebrows moved.

The nurse felt her pulse while looking at her wristwatch.

“She’s lightening,” she said. “Tell her some more. She loves hearing your voice.”

“Okay,” Daisy said, trying not to cry.

“A boy named Bertie was in the bathroom one morning and saw the start of a pimple on his nose.

“He couldn’t go to high school with this pimple, so he put a Band-Aid on it.

Daisy Summerfield's Art

“It looked like the Band-Aid was covering a pimple so he added more Band-Aids.

“It still looked like he was covering a pimple, so he found a roll of gauze and wrapped it around his head.

“He wrapped it around his chest and legs.

“When he came down to breakfast his mother thought he had been in a terrible accident and she almost fainted.”

What's wrong with me, thought Daisy.

“Hn, hn.”

“I thought it was funny. I remembered it all these years!”

Daphne's eyes closed.

“Don't go back to sleep!”

The door opened.

“Daphne's awake,” the nurse greeted Alan.

He kissed her hair.

“Are you awake?”

“Hi.”

The Pink Confucius

“Daisy woke her up,” the nurse said. “She was telling her funny stories.”

“Funny stories?”

“From books I read in seventh or eighth grade.”

“Will you tell them to me?”

“No.”

“Please?”

“No.”

•

Daisy paid and entered the flea market. Mike Angeli was right behind her.

“What are you doing here?” she cried.

People fall in love with artists because they’re charming, but they just want to be let alone.

“I walk around and look,” she said, picking up a cuckoo clock.

The dealer said, “I gotta get sixty for that.”

She put it down.

Daisy Summerfield's Art

"You don't like it?" asked Mike. "My grandmother had one just like it."

"So did mine.

"Does it work?" she asked the dealer, who was helping someone else.

"Must be nice, being a famous sculptor who solves crimes. I never solved one."

"You must have!"

Daisy saw the tall pockmarked dealer.

"Man, I can't believe the conversations we have," Mike said. "Tell me what cases you solved."

She turned and said, "They all had to do with china."

Something whistled past her ear.

Dishes exploded.

Taig arrived.

"Who pays for breakage?" a dealer demanded. "I'm away from my booth fifteen minutes, my table gets shot."

The Pink Confucius

She had the manner New Yorkers are known for, but she was from New Jersey.

•

“Going to the flea market?” asked Taig.

From the front of Daisy’s apartment came the loud voices of little birds in the trees on 86th Street.

She saw her T-shirt and reached for it. Taig touched her, but she pulled the T-shirt on.

They were embarrassed to get out of bed.

He swung around, put on underwear and jeans, and went to the bathroom.

When he came out she was dressed and it was her turn to use the bathroom.

“Want to get married?”

“No,” she called. “Maybe when I’m sixty.”

“When’s that?”

“Nine years.”

“You’re old!”

Daisy Summerfield's Art

"How old are you?"

"Forty-two."

"That's a great age," she said. "I loved being forty-two."

•

"Do you do surveillance and pee in a cup?" she asked over pancakes.

"Yes."

"Do you know how I know?"

"You read detective tales, as I recall."

•

Daphne was sitting up in bed, wearing her flannel robe from Lord & Taylor.

Daisy said, "It still looks good."

"It's not that old."

"Did you find out anything?"

"About what?"

"Life."

"I knew you'd ask me that!"

The Pink Confucius

•

“Doesn’t anyone bring you candy?”

“Oh, look at the tiny daffodils!”

“They’re *Narcissus cyclamineus*,” Daphne said, reading from a card.

“They’re from the Taigs.”

“They look like darling little clothespins! Did Alan tell you I got my gift?”

“Do you like it?”

“Yes! What did James Rose say about it?”

“Nothing much.”

•

“Why are you lying down?”

“I know if I stay here, I’ll see you every day.”

“Where are your glasses?”

Daphne put them on, and Daisy took the pink Confucius out of her bag.

“What is that?” asked Daphne.

“This is what you got me!”

Daisy Summerfield's Art

"And you like it?"

"I love it. I paid sixty dollars for it!"

"I paid sixty thousand."

"*Six thousand dollars?* You don't remember."

"Six-tee thousand."

"SIXTEEN thousand!"

"Why?"

"Because you're Daisy. You're an integral and important part of our lives."

"Thanks," she said, smiling. "And you are of mine."

1993

New York streets are like discos. Catch the rhythm before stepping out on the dance floor.

West 41st Street was taking a break as Daisy strolled east, eating a slice of pizza.

She arrived at the junk shop, wrapped what was left of the crust in a napkin, and went inside.

She saw a red-and-white patterned box that had four white spaces on the lid and matching spaces on the bottom.

Ornamental fowl in blue, yellow, and pale turquoise were in the reserved spaces.

Holding it, she walked around the store, looking at everything.

The knob on the box was an ugly figure of Hotei covered with thick gold paint.

The gold on the edge of the lid was thin and fine, more beige than gold.

195

Daisy Summerfield's Art

A mark on the bottom of the box, a red hunting horn, was the famous mark of Chantilly.

It was strange that no one had bought it. The price sticker was old and dirty.

If no one recognized the tiny painted mark, why was the box so expensive?

She took it to the counter.

Hi," she said. "Does this have to be forty?"

"No." The woman put her chicken back in its container. "I can make it thirty."

"Thanks!"

Carrying the two wrapped pieces in her bag, Daisy continued east to the IRT subway.

She exited at the corner of her apartment building at 86th and Broadway.

•

Everyone was a detective in those days, and Daisy, now four blocks uptown at Murder Inc., was thrilled.

The Chantilly Box

“Find something you like?”

She was fumbling her money, too excited to understand the denominations.

“Calm down. Here, have a candy.”

“I loved *Mopsy*,” she said, choking on a butterscotch. “Sometimes she was a paper doll—”

“Did you read the back cover?”

If you agonized while cutting around the tiny wrists and tousled hair of *Mopsy* when she appeared as a paper doll in the Sunday comics, you’ll be glad to know that she now works for you!

The delicate windswept beauty attracts trouble like a magnet and repels it with a flick of a tiny red nail.

“I’m praying it’s good.”

“We’ve had good feedback.”

“When did it come out?”

Daisy Summerfield's Art

“Last year. We’re expecting the new one any day.”

“How did I miss it?”

“I don’t know.”

•

When she washed the porcelain box, Daisy saw the Hotei had been restored.

It was wet so she broke off his head, exposing the original gilt on his body.

She was going to spend the rest of the afternoon removing the restorer’s paint.

•

Water ran noisily into her tub.

She stepped in and lay back with a sigh, admiring the raised red display type on the cover of her new paperback.

“Created by Gladys Parker.”

How well she remembered the name!

The Chantilly Box

With it came the sound of wind in ancient trees, the glow of yellow light bulbs, mold, mildew, paper dolls, cards, and the dream of creating her own comic.

Instead, she became a sculptor.

The shiny flexible paperback felt good in her stiff work-thickened hands.

Mopsy, wearing a red suit with black lapels and cuffs, posed beside a desk.

A blurb praised the book's "warmth and humor."

Every day had been a red-letter day since Daisy stopped carving. Today she got this book and the porcelain box that might have been made by Chantilly.

The factory opened in 1725 and closed in 1789 "due to the French Revolution."

Water covered most of her shapely body.

She sat up, soaking her knees. She sank down, wetting her chin.

Her faded blond hair floated in the water. She was 52 years old.

Daisy Summerfield's Art

She started reading and was surprised by the relaxed voice of the comics.

She put her book and glasses on the sink, and shampooed and rinsed her hair.

As she picked up her soap and washcloth she thought she heard a noise.

These old buildings make all kinds of noise, she thought.

A familiar tapping started in the wall next to the toilet.

•

Wrapped in a towel and seated on the edge of the tub, she put on her glasses.

“Whadda beeyutiful doll!”

Dressed in the height of fashion, Mopsy sat still in her desk chair.

“Cripe,” said the burglar, “it *is* a doll—one a them mannikins.”

The Chantilly Box

He crept to the file cabinet, opened a drawer, and found the Weiss file.

“Freeze.” Mopsy pointed her tiny gun at him.

“A talking doll!”

She pressed a button under her desk, and Lieutenant Ryan came in smiling.

Meanwhile, on the other side of town, a crook known as Bug Eyes . . .

Holding the towel around her, Daisy stepped into her moccasins and went to look at her box.

Her bed was dotted with books she had referred to when she came home.

She looked on her desktop, window ledges, tool chest, and sculpture stands.

She thought she had left it on her steel bookcase but couldn't be sure.

Daisy Summerfield's Art

She went to her front door, turned the knob, and pulled the door open.

Her mail was on the mat.

She picked it up.

You look and look and try not to see it was a saying of one of her grandmothers.

She went back to the bathroom and shook her head. No. Not in there.

Her phone rang.

She knew what happened. Taig stopped by, found the door unlocked, and took it to teach her a lesson.

“Okay,” she said, laughing.

“Daisy?”

“Daphne?”

“Who are you talking to?”

“No one.”

“Should I call you back?”

“I lost something.”

The Chantilly Box

“What?”

“A box I bought at the junk shop.”

“You’ll find it.”

She had seen a flea market dealer at the junk shop. He must have followed her home!

But he had been there when she got there. He would have seen it first.

She looked in the pockets of her black velvet jacket and found the pizza crust and ate it.

•

Across town on Madison Avenue two men were talking about her.

“You can’t call her!” James Rose said.

“Why not?”

“She’ll know it’s valuable.”

“So we pay more.”

“I forget. How do we know her?”

“She’s a friend of the Taigs.”

Daisy Summerfield's Art

"She's an attractive woman," James Rose said, referring to Taig's mother.

"That box could be important."

"It's repaired," Leon said.

"The head is nothing!"

Daisy's card was face up on their Rolodex.

The buzzer sounded and a man entered and put a red and white box on the desk.

"You wait till someone buys it so you can pay more? Where's the head?" asked Leon.

"It must of fell off."

"You go into stores without money?"

"I didn't have fifty bucks!"

They say you can't take it with you, and ancient tombs are proof, but what about his father's mind?

Who knew what became of that? Maybe it went out like a light, and maybe somewhere it kept shining.

The Chantilly Box

Earthenware objects spoke to James Rose. They told him their ages and makers.

Some decorators added their own marks, so they even said who painted them.

“They don’t say it,” James Rose used to argue.

“You ask the right questions, Dad! You can see right off if something has age.”

Now his father said, “Don’t give it back!”

“It’s stolen.”

The runner said, “I’ll put it back for fifty bucks.”

Jankowitz, the bald janitor, listened while slowly mopping the storeroom.

•

Taig couldn’t wait to see Daisy as he put his key in the lock.

She pulled the door open. “Did you take the little box I bought today?”

“No. What happened?” he asked in his deep voice.

Daisy Summerfield's Art

"I went to a junk shop and found a little box and came home and washed it.

"Then I took a bath, and while I was in the bath—"

Fear gripped him and he couldn't grip back.

That was its nature.

He closed his eyes. Maybe he prayed. The answer came: find the box.

"What did it look like?"

He started pulling the duvet.

Mopsy fell to the floor. He picked it up. "Great title. Know the author?"

"I don't want to discuss *literature*. Tell me what to do."

"Thank God you're alive."

"Barely."

He grabbed her arm. "Tell me how you're hurt!"

"I found a valuable old box, and while I was taking a bath someone stole it."

The Chantilly Box

“You didn’t see the person. You didn’t come into physical contact with an intruder. Am I right?”

“Right.”

How can she read this crap, he wondered, high with relief.

He said, “You were thinking of writing mysteries. You had a name picked out.”

“Patricia de la Corpse.”

“Maybe it’s too obvious.”

Her eyes narrowed.

“Let’s go and get some more books. Come on, I’ll buy them for you.”

The new *Mopsy* might have come in. She would like to have it. Hers was melting away like the candy Jay gave her.

•

A cheerful cover caught her eye, a tiny skeleton leaning against a jam jar on a red-and-white check cloth.

“Has the new *Mopsy* come in?” she asked.

“What new one?”

Daisy Summerfield's Art

"Jay said you were getting it."

"Not until September."

Then, when they were eating at the coffee shop, Taig said, "Could you have left it on the train?"

•

If the dealer stole the box, who would he sell it to?

There is a hierarchy of dealers. A dealer on a low rung sells to one above him.

Daisy called James Rose and said, "I bought a Chantilly box yesterday."

"Do you want to sell it?"

"It was stolen from my apartment."

"Maybe you should move."

"I'll tell you what it looks like in case the thief tries to sell it."

"Fair enough."

"It's four feet by four feet."

"Four feet?"

•

The Chantilly Box

Daisy saw a patch of blue.

“Those are bluebirds of happiness,” Mr. Flea, whistled through his stained gray beard.

The plastic was old and they wore little string harnesses someone had made for them.

They looked like toys that had been in her crib, like birthday candle holders she recalled.

They were the blaze of glory, the smoke of the past, the crumby sweetness of the flea market.

•

The dealer who stole Daisy’s box was the father-in-law of a dealer named Tony.

Tony looked as if he had been crying. His father-in-law was in the hospital.

“Hello,” another dealer said.

“Where have you been?” she cried. “I’m so glad to see you.”

“We’re going back next month. We’re building a house out there.”

Daisy Summerfield's Art

As she prayed for something to stop him, he handed her a thick stack of photos.

He looked at them with her, saying, "I can put you in touch with an agent."

"That's so nice of you!"

•

"I learned something today."

"What did you learn?"

"It's sad."

"I'm sorry."

Taig wanted her to be happy and liked to think he would do anything in his power to make her so.

"The dealer who stole my box got beat up Friday night."

"That's too bad."

"Do you know about it?"

"Does he have a name? Do you know where the alleged beating took place?"

The Chantilly Box

“I can find out next week. I think it happened because I called James Rose.”

•

Taig had been at Harvard when his father bought two of Daisy's Witnesses.

He had listened to Alan Kodaly one stormy Saturday instead of going on to the next gallery.

Her sculptures were shown with a González in a spread on the Taigs' home in *Vogue*.

They might have predisposed Taig to fall in love with her after they influenced his choice of career.

She made magic for many people and longed for someone to make magic for her.

She read mysteries in which female sleuths had police-officer boyfriends.

Now she too had one, and he was as unhelpful as his fictional counterparts were to the women they loved.

Daisy Summerfield's Art

They should have been happy, but maybe they were too old or lacked a gift for intimacy.

“What did you do today?” he asked.

“If you were Bug Eyes, you’d know.”

“Who’s Bug Eyes?”

“Mopsy’s arch enemy. His eyeballs are faceted so he can see behind him.”

“Okay.”

“He wants to destroy Chicago!”

•

Daisy and Taig and Daphne and Alan met at America.

“Great name,” Daisy said, as Alan and Daphne kissed her.

“Isn’t it a great name?” she asked, watching Taig kiss Daphne and shake Alan’s hand.

“Don’t you think so?” she asked Alan.

He said, “It’s named for the song.”

A busboy put the bread near Daphne.

The Chantilly Box

“Did you find any treasures at the flea market today?” Alan asked Daisy.

When would Daphne take a piece of bread and pass it?

“May I have the bread?”

Daisy took a piece and gave Taig the basket.

He handed it to Alan.

“May I have the butter?”

She broke her roll, buttered it, and as she chewed her mood elevated.

There were many vegetarian dishes on the menu. She ordered pasta primavera.

They all chose that.

“Did you go to the flea market?” asked Alan.

“Yes. I tried to find the dealer who stole something from my apartment!”

“It must be there,” Daphne said.

“It’s not.”

“What are you reading?” Alan asked.

Daisy Summerfield's Art

Daisy took the book from her pocket and showed it to him.

“Is it good?”

“I’m rereading it.” She found a passage to read aloud.

An ugly gangster burst through the door.

Mopsy uncapped her nail polish.

Choking, the gangster recoiled. He dropped his gun and put up his hands.

The fumes were killing him. They reminded him of his ma in Paducah.

“Isn’t that very American?”

Daisy’s head rose on her neck. Her nostrils dilated. “What’s wrong with that?”

Taig winked at Daphne.

Daisy asked, “Has anyone read *Pluche* by Jean Dutord? He’s the only writer whose descriptions of paintings don’t embarrass me.”

The Chantilly Box

Daphne said, “Why would a description of a painting embarrass you?”

“They’re so bad, so banal, so untrue!

“In a great scholarly book, you read about Matisse as if he were fictional.

“Description is an art and a discipline. It’s what a *fu* is.”

Alan turned to Taig. “What are you reading?”

“I don’t have time to read. I leave that to Daisy.”

She hated being part of a couple.

“I learn a lot from mysteries,” she said. “A police chief had a bowl of noodles that sounded so good, I made it.”

“What was in it?” Daphne asked.

“I adapted it.”

“What did you use for meat?”

“Artichoke hearts.”

“What else?”

“I don’t remember.”

Daisy Summerfield's Art

“You made it for us. It was terrific. Has she made it for you?” she asked Taig.

“I don’t even know what I put in it! Garlic. Chop up three or four cloves.

“Scallions—I remember cutting them. You add everything while the noodles are hot so they absorb the flavor.”

“That’s so cute!” Daphne said.

“Taig solved a murder.”

“Did you really?”

“That’s fantastic,” said Alan.

“It’s what you pay me for.”

“Everyone thinks artists are good cooks.”

Daisy tried to save them from the old cliché of being Taig’s employers.

They liked it and proceeded to have a long talk about police work.

Daphne said she was upset.

Taig asked her why.

She said, “I failed a Ph. D. candidate for plagiarism.”

The Chantilly Box

“Not James Ray!” cried Daisy.

“How do you know him?”

“He loves you,” she moaned.

“How’s the art world?” asked Taig.

“Tell him about the man who bought the early Monet,” Daphne said.

“He told me he was surprised the neat ones cost more than the messy ones, meaning the water lilies.”

They all laughed, and Daisy told a story about Pluche at the junk shop.

“He bought a taxidermized squirrel holding a nut, and a volume of Ingres’ *Thoughts*.

“The junkman said, Now that I know what you like, I’ll keep an eye out for you.”

•

Splaying her fingers on her desk for support, Mopsy took off a spike heel mule.

Daisy Summerfield's Art

She shook it, and a tiny sharp stone flew into the gunman's eye.

"Help! Help!" he cried, rocketing around the room.

He forgot he was holding his gun and hit himself in the eye.

Daisy put the book back in her bag and exited the subway at 28th Street.

She walked down Seventh Avenue, turned east on 26th, paid, had her hand stamped, and went to Tony's booth.

"How is your father-in-law?" she asked.

"He's still in traction."

"He was nice to me." She had once bought a charm from him. "I'd like to send him a card."

"You're the only one who cares!"

She found a pen and a receipt and wrote, "Paul Beechik, Roosevelt Hosp."

"Where did it happen?" she asked.

The Chantilly Box

“Tenth Avenue and Twenty-third Street.”

“He has a red and white china box I want.”

“Not that one.”

“Why?”

“The V and A’s coming to see it.”

•

“I told you Bug Eyes’ eyes are faceted, but did I say there was an iris and pupil in each one?”

“That’s disgusting,” Taig said.

“Really?”

“How many facets?”

“I don’t know. He wears dark glasses.” Snort. “Mopsy’s never met him face to face.”

•

Daisy bought a porcelain scholar whose scroll had broken off, but his blue kimono and yellow gown showed the rainbow effects of age with no other damage.

Daisy Summerfield's Art

Wearing a conical black hat, he was hurrying to show a friend a new poem.

“In your sleeves more than ten new poems,” wrote Po Chü-i [tr. Howard S. Levy].

The dealer wrapped him in newspaper and put him in a soiled plastic bag.

At another booth Daisy reached for an irregularly shaped jar.

“Give me four bucks,” the dealer said.

She was taking the package from him when Lulu King asked, “What did you get, my dear?”

She was so large and beautiful that she attracted all eyes of the flea market.

“A little vase.”

Daisy wanted a longer look at these ceramics which might have been stolen.

“You have quite an eye for china, don't you?”

“No.”

The Chantilly Box

Lulu took her arm and held out her hand to display a ring she had bought.

“That’s great!” Daisy said.

“I saw you and the Kodalys and your new sweetie at America. You looked like a queen with her court.”

“They treat me like a child.”

“You are a child. I studied you at Pratt, and *I* feel protective of you. Do you like this?” She held up a top.

“It’s synthetic.”

“Do you always wear linen?”

“I love these shirts, but they’re expensive.”

“May I?”

Daisy assented, and Lulu twisted the back of her collar to read the label.

Was she hoping that Lulu would say she could get them for her wholesale?

“I knew it! I got a Daisy Summerfield sample at Pearl River!”

Daisy Summerfield's Art

“Don’t you wish they would make them in flannel? I did call and request it.”

“Try some other kind,” Lulu said, and stopped to look at auction catalogs.

Daisy wondered if there was one for vintage comics. She thought of making a strip for *Artgirl*. No sex or raw language—just women artists doing what they do.

But the older she got, the less she liked drawing.

“Do you have time for lunch?” Lulu asked.

“No, darling, not the coffee shop. You may not care what you eat, but I do.”

Daisy examined the ring as they rode uptown in a cab.

They entered the restaurant. At this odd hour they didn’t have to wait.

“Isn’t the flea market wonderful? I told someone it’s my art form,” Daisy said.

“How often do you go?”

“Every Saturday and Sunday.”

The Chantilly Box

“Let’s order. Then I want to see your vase.”

She studied the menu.

“When you say the Kodalys treat you like a child, do they say you should get back to work?”

“Maybe they’re right.”

Daisy unwrapped the jar, saying, “This grayish white pottery with crab claw crackles is the most valuable kind.”

“It could have been used to heat saki.”

Lulu looked at its blackened bottom, and the two women happily envisioned Toshiro Mifune in *Yojimbo*.

“Now tell me what you’ve been up to.”

•

Good artists had the tough practicality that got them where so many wished to be.

They didn’t love art. They used it.

If they couldn’t work large, they worked small. If they didn’t have any space at all, they did conceptual art.

Daisy Summerfield's Art

“Art isn’t art if you know how to do it,” Daisy said. “You agree, don’t you?”

“I think you take it too far.”

•

As they finished their sundaes, Lulu said, “I *knew* you knew a lot about china!”

Wearing four inch heels with spaghetti straps, she wanted Daisy to walk up Madison and look at galleries with her.

“What’s wrong with the Kuhlman?”

“Nothing. I need some group shows.”

•

Daisy fled back to the corner.

“See someone you slept with?”

“No! That china shop I was telling you about is just a few doors down!”

“I’ll go in and ask if they have a Chantilly box.”

“No!”

The Chantilly Box

“Why not? I’ll say I have a friend who collects eighteenth-century chinoiserie.”

“Don’t mention a box! Say you want a gift for someone who collects . . .”

“How do I look?”

“Gorgeous.” Daisy watched the large confident buttocks swing away.

Lulu pressed the bell and Leon gazed up at a goddess.

She stood on the raised threshold and sang, “I forgot what kind of china my friend likes.”

“I’m sorry.”

“You should be. I was prepared to spend thousands! Wait. I’ve got it. Orientalisme.”

She wasn’t doing this for her health. She wished Daisy could hear her.

“French and English chinoiserie is still popular and hard to get.”

“Oh, don’t say you don’t have anything after being so wonderful!”

Daisy Summerfield's Art

Leon was called to the phone and his father took over. "We have heard about a piece," he said in a low voice, "a box made at Chantilly."

He took her to the case of early English china. "Do you know china?"

"No, darling. Just their food."

"You see the knops or knobs on these teapots."

"Yes."

"The button. The little dog."

"Got it."

"The knop on the box is a Buddha. The head was damaged and is being restored."

"Will you call me when it's done?" She searched in her bag for a card.

"It will be my pleasure."

•

"I was brilliant. They both loved me."

"Two big men? One old, one my age?"

The Chantilly Box

“Yes, darling, and the old man whispered to me about a Chantilly box.”

“WHAT?”

“The knob is a Buddha. The head’s being restored.”

“It’s not Buddha, it’s Hotei. I wonder how they knew it was genuine. I thought it was,” she babbled.

“Will you ask him to write it on a card?”

“No. Sure you won’t come with me?”

Even at her age, I never had that vitality, Daisy thought, hailing a cab.

•

She arrived at the flea market soaked with sweat and blinded by the fierce glare of the sun.

She went through the turnstile and sought the shade of the tarp over Tony’s booth.

She saw her box and picked it up.

“How much is this?” she asked.

“Five bucks.”

Daisy Summerfield's Art

She had to let him wrap it.

She watched as the top then the bottom went on to sheets of newspaper.

“I’ll put them in my bag.”

Someone could have bought it, and she never would have known it had been there!

“Did your father-in-law get the flowers I sent? I wrote, we miss you at the flea market.”

“He’s home now.”

Under the blue plastic roof it was dark.

She felt then heard a low growl. Moments later, a white flare lit the sky.

Dealers covered their wares with plastic.

Umbrellas magically went up.

She moved back and bumped into Tony.

She kept moving aside as he carried in furniture, but she was in his way.

•

The Chantilly Box

“Look,” she said.

“Hey.”

“You don’t know what this is.”

“No.”

“It’s the Chantilly box the dealer stole from me. I bought it from his son-in-law.”

“Are you sure it’s the same one?”

“I broke the head off. I’m going to remove as much of this gold paint as I can.”

She showed him the original gold and the mark. “It’s early eighteenth-century.”

“Could it be fake?”

She stepped back to view it, saying, “James Rose didn’t think it was fake.

“The mark isn’t under the glaze. It was painted after the piece was fired.

“I have to find out when Chantilly made a red mark over the glaze.

Daisy Summerfield's Art

"If a mark isn't under the glaze, it could have been added at any time."

"So it *could* be fake."

"A potter named Samson copied all the old porcelains. I had one once."

She was looking in her bookshelves for George Savage's *French Porcelain*.

"Oh, not Savage—Honey."

She took out a blue cloth book that had a red label on the spine, and turned to the index.

"Chantilly. Here we go."

Why was he watching her?

It made her feel uptight.

She turned past CHANTILLY to MENNECY, past MENNECY to VINCENNES.

"Oh, look. I think I have a Vincennes toilet pot. Five and three-fourths inches?"

"Wait, I'll get mine."

The Chantilly Box

“Mine is less than three inches.”

“It’s beautiful, though.”

“Mine, or the one in the book?”

“Yours is more interesting.”

She showed off the three butterflies, turning the small column in her hand.

The four colors, blue, black, red, and yellow, were painted over the glaze.

“Would you say it was a museum piece?”

“I don’t know,” she said.

“Why don’t you start sculpting again?” he asked, looking at her sculpture on the bookcase.

“That says more to me than any of your china.”

•

“Guess what!”

“You found your box at the flea market.”

Daisy Summerfield's Art

“It’s a sweetmeat box in the style of Japanese Kakiemon porcelain. Chantilly’s mark was a hunting horn, and the red horn over the glaze is their oldest and best period.”

“I’m surprised you want it.”

“Did the French even hunt?”

“You bet.”

“They just like tight clothes. Remember when the women in Paris were mean because their jeans were too tight?

“They were nicer when they wore those long, diagonally-striped skirts.

“What’s the big street on the Left Bank?”

“Boule Miche.”

“I remember dozens of diagonally-striped skirts crossing Boule Miche.”

“You loved Le Drugstore.”

“People brought their dogs and the waiters served them. I tried to buy Gauloise Disque Bleu, and they didn’t understand me.

The Chantilly Box

“Guys are standing at the counter, saying, Deux Ca-melle. Maghri-boghro, s’il vous plait.”

“We sure ate a lot of ice cream. I know you don’t eat it anymore, but it was fun,” Daphne said.

“And maybe the elegant man who takes one tiny bite and leaves the rest wouldn’t order rice cream.

“This is what Honey says:

““The handling of the designs—perhaps on account of the tin-glazed surface—shows an effect of fine black outlines and flat colour that is different from the manner adopted at Meissen.

““The colours themselves have a remarkable soft brilliance—the fine red usually has a mat surface, but the clear blue, pale yellow and turquoise-toned green colours are perfectly fused into the soft white glaze.”“

“I’m so glad you found it!”

““The playful slightness of the decoration and the absence of all symmetry find the Japanese and incipient Rococo taste at one.”“

•

Daisy Summerfield's Art

Taig took the morning off to be with Daisy.

After suggesting a walk in Riverside Park and being turned down, he went out for croissants and espressos.

Finally he left for work and she called James Rose.

“This is Daisy Summerfield.”

“Let me transfer you to my son.”

“Wait. You remember the Chantilly box I said was stolen? I found it!”

The line went dead.

She called back.

“Mr. Rose is with a client. Would you like to leave your name and number?”

“Please ask him to call before eleven. I won't be home from eleven to five for the next few days.”

She took some things and went to the service hall across from her apartment.

The service door closed after her.

The Chantilly Box

To keep it slightly open she tried a folded matchbook which was useless.

She went back to her apartment, got a piece of corrugated cardboard, and sat down on a tread.

A frosted window was at her back, a fluorescent light high above her head.

The stairs were maroon, and the walls were maroon up to about four feet.

The upper walls and ceiling were cream color.

The door to her right opened and an elderly woman came out carrying a small bag of garbage.

“Hi,” Daisy said.

The woman deposited her garbage and went back to her kitchen.

Daisy drank some water from a bottle, looking up at tiers of bolted steel.

•

There was a smell of detergent. The hall door opened and a porter pushed in a mop.

Daisy Summerfield's Art

“Hi, Roberto. Want me to move?”

“No. I do the stairs mañana.”

She replaced her doorstep. The light behind the frosted window never seemed to change.

Someone was coming down the stairs!

She quickly gathered her things. A cigarette butt flew out of her ashtray on to the newly mopped floor.

She picked it up and ran across the hall.

•

Daisy envisioned four purplish stones pierced with light around the bluebirds she had bought from Mr. Flea.

She dashed back to her apartment and got a sketchbook and a pencil.

Oh, the joy of working. The fun of saying, I can't believe I'm doing this!

Looking up, she wondered why she was sitting in the service hall across from her apartment.

The Chantilly Box

She saw a legal-size yellow paper taped to the wall, and got up and read:

To the person (or persons) who use this hallway for smoking:

I am extremely sensitive to cigarette smoke (some say abnormally so). For some inexplicable reason, your smoke comes under my door. I implore you not to smoke in this hallway.

I assume you want to keep your own apartment smoke free. There is a simple solution: use another hallway.

Thank you for being a good neighbor.

She took a cigarette from her pack, put it between her lips, and reconsidered.

The tenant had come down the stairs and found grains of burnt tobacco.

What if he did it again, just when . . .

Daisy Summerfield's Art

She heard a noise.

She peeked out the crack and saw a man at her door.

She slid out the aerial on her phone and pressed 911.

Tink, tonk, tonk.

The giant didn't hear the tones.

"What is your emergency?"

"Can you hear me?" she whispered.

"What's the problem?"

"Someone's at my door."

"Who is at your door?"

"Someone's trying to break in!"

"What's your address?"

She whispered it and the apartment number.

The man's eyes met hers in the crack.

He lunged through the door and her phone fell and broke on the painted concrete floor.

The Chantilly Box

She called 911 from her kitchen. “The person who was breaking into my apartment is a big bald man! He ran down the stairs to the vestibule!”

Down below, officers led the thug to the curb.

Daisy went to her door.

Taig stared at her with red-rimmed eyes.

He was another three days behind in his casework, and he had to put in extra time to pay for his partner’s time and the car they used as a blind.

He wanted to take the few things Daisy let him keep there, and leave.

He said, “Sam thinks you’re a pistol.”

Her flush made him think of Browning’s duchess.

. . . such stuff

Was courtesy she thought, and cause enough

For calling up that spot of joy.

Daisy Summerfield's Art

•

The bald man was James Rose's janitor. He was suspected of the brutal murders of two women.

"Do you see why I was upset?" Taig asked.

"Would you have caught him if not for me?"

"Want to be a cop?"

"I don't work for other people. I make my own assignments."

•

"How could you say that to him?" Lulu cried. "He's a dreamboat! Apologize and start sculpting again."

1994

Antique china has value but it isn't fine art.

Like people it is made of clay.

Only art, architecture, literature, and music speak of the human aspiration to match the stars.

Standing before her china cabinet, Daisy could banish one object, bring forward another, put a third in the back row.

It was a world of things that had something to say—a look, a style, a name, an address, a personality.

The old pieces she had found were gently scrubbed and rinsed by her.

The chips and cracks they had suffered were now part of their beauty.

Wouldn't it be great to be chosen by an artist like Daisy, and having been chosen, kept?

Wouldn't it be humiliating to be washed, dried, studied, and placed in a bag for the thrift shop?

241

Daisy Summerfield's Art

That is what happened to a former friend of Daisy's, a woman named Nancy Dick.

For to hear Daisy exclaim, as she did when she set a blue, yellow, maroon, and green-striped vase from the junk shop next to a maroon-flowered bowl from the flea market, "They're Persian," you had to be authentic.

"We're here to learn how to choose," she told her best friend, Daphne Kodaly.

"I thought you were here to make sculpture."

"I got tired of seeing my name."

"It means a lot to people who love your work."

"And copy it."

"Most artists would be pleased."

Daisy wasn't most artists. Now in her early fifties, she was a stern moral character.

"Marry Taig and take his name."

"Po Chü-i had a daughter, Summer Dress. I'd like the name Summer Dress. You can call me Summer."

The China Doll

•

There was an antique miniatures booth at the flea market.

Bent at the waist, her hands behind her back, Daisy studied the tiny worn things.

She saw two women talking and called, “How much is the little green bowl?”

She paced beside the exhibit.

“What did you want to see?”

“That little green bowl.”

The dealer unlocked the case, took out the bowl, and named a price.

Daisy didn’t ask if she would take less, and the dealer didn’t hand her the bowl.

Usually it was the feel of an object that made her want to buy it.

She went on to the next booth.

“What are you looking for?” Nancy Dick asked Daisy.

Daisy hesitated.

Daisy Summerfield's Art

If she were to say she collected china, Nancy would start collecting it too.

“Clothes,” she said.

It was spring, and both women wore the jeans and work boots they wore all year.

Blond, brown-eyed Daisy wore hers with a chambray shirt and a new denim jacket from SoHo.

The pale blue flannel lining was printed with French comic book characters.

She returned to the miniatures booth, looked in the glass case, and went to find the dealer.

“Why did you do that?” she asked her.

The dealer looked in the case, seized Daisy's arm, and started screaming.

The market manager came running and Daisy showed him a china-headed doll lying on a shelf with a dagger in its chest.

“She did it!” cried the dealer.

The China Doll

Daisy assumed she meant the woman she had been talking with earlier.

Detective Taig's former partner raised his eyebrows at Daisy.

"Officer," the dealer said, "this woman damaged a valuable antique doll."

Sam put on a latex glove and tried to open the case. It was locked or stuck.

"Got the key?" he asked Daisy.

She shook her head.

"That your dagger?"

"No."

"It's mine," the dealer said.

Sam had sardonic brown eyes and a coffee complexion.

"I can't remember everything I have!"

"What's that dagger worth?" Sam asked.

She opened the case with her key, picked up the doll, and pulled out the dagger.

Daisy Summerfield's Art

Daisy had seen four tiny raised words on the pale green plastic:
Made in Hong Kong.

"It's jade," the dealer said.

"Is it yours?"

"Yes. I'm so glad I found it!"

She was enthralled with her new toy and the antique doll lay forgotten.

"Do you want to apologize to my friend?"

"I apologize," she said. "Did you come back to get the little bowl you liked so much?"

Daisy was embarrassed to buy it in front of the father of two little girls.

"Meet you by the gate?" he asked.

"When?"

"When you're through here."

"What's lowest price you can take?" Daisy asked the dealer.

"I can't go lower than forty."

The China Doll

“Who is the woman you were talking with earlier?” Daisy asked when she paid.

“My daughter, Scottie.”

•

“How are Darlene and Carmel?”

“Want to get coffee?”

Daisy had seen iridescence on the green bowl and thought it was the rainbow of age.

She and Sam walked down to 23rd and over to the Fritzie Coffee Shop, a few doors east of Seventh Avenue.

“I’m having pie.”

“Me too,” Daisy said.

“If Carmel goes to private kindergarten, Darlene should go to private school.”

“Right!” said Daisy.

“Maria says Darlene can get along anywhere.”

“Why should she?”

Daisy Summerfield's Art

“Hey, I can’t afford two tuitions! What kind of fruit pie do you have?” he asked the waiter.

“No fruit pie. We have apple, cherry, blueberry, and banana cream.”

They needed more coffee, so Sam got up. “It’s coming,” he said, sitting down.

“The waiter said he’ll bring it.”

“Do you read fiction?” she asked.

“I like spy stories.”

“I like the ones about art theft.”

Sam kept looking over his shoulder, holding up his finger, trying to signal the waiter.

“If you get a good one, it’s like a good haircut. It won’t last. That’s why I like series.”

“Waiter?”

“Though some authors are so individual, we read *them* as series.”

Her eyes shone.

“I got a book called *The Poetics of Murder*.”

The China Doll

“Poetry, huh?”

“They’re essays. One says we read murders because we’ve been robbed and murdered.”

“Uh-huh.”

“That must be why so many women read and write them.”

“Waiter!”

“Though life is a mystery.”

Sam’s face was in profile. His eye was wide open.

“A series may be the only continuity people have,” she said.

He wiped the bottom of his freshly filled cup with his napkin, blotted up the coffee from his saucer, and set his clean cup in his clean saucer.

She put her cup on her napkin and pushed the saucer away.

“Maria wants Carmel to be like you.”

Mothers always wanted their daughters to be like Daisy, and she resented it.

Now she joked, “But probably better dressed.”

Daisy Summerfield's Art

The famous model in your dentist's waiting room, looking very plain, is not Maria.

•

Daisy reached for her jacket and said, "I have ideas for two mystery series."

"Still like your jacket?" Taig asked.

"I love it."

He wished he had bought it for her. He never knew what would please her.

"A person loves an author's work," she began, as he opened the door.

"Okay."

"He knows she's writing but not publishing."

"Salinger?"

She flashed a smile.

"He finds out where she lives and tries to steal the manuscripts, just to read them."

The China Doll

She found her key in her soft clean deep pocket and locked her door.

Taig rang for the elevator.

“Each time he breaks in to ‘borrow’ a manuscript, he solves a murder.”

Taig added in his deep voice, “The police start to wonder. Who is this person from Manhattan?”

The elevator came, and Daisy stepped in laughing.

“The other is a small town hardware store owner. The murder weapons come from her store.”

They exchanged greetings with the elevator man and faced front.

As they rode down to the lobby she felt a small object in her pocket.

“I bought a miniature bowl at the flea market,” she said as they walked up Broadway.

“It was expensive, so I left. But everything I have is expensive if you add the things I don’t keep.

“If something cost four dollars, it really cost four hundred dollars.”

Daisy Summerfield's Art

"Sure," Taig said.

"But when I went back I saw a china-headed doll with a dagger in her chest.

"I thought Sam would cordon off the area."

"Sam was there?"

"We went out for coffee. He wouldn't touch his pie until he had coffee."

"What a guy."

•

"How long have we been together?" Taig asked Daisy.

"Two years."

"Do we have an anniversary?"

Just then her doorbell rang.

She went to answer it saying, "Daphne was in a coma a year ago last spring, and now it's spring again."

She opened the peephole. "Harrietta Taig," called a large woman from the other side.

"What are you doing here?" asked Taig.

The China Doll

“We stopped at Murray’s.”

Her short gray hair sprang from her head in a neat way, and her hazel eyes were luminous. On the lapel of her tweed jacket she wore a silver brooch.

“Is that a Calder?” asked Daisy.

“I must have been inspired!” Harrietta took it off and handed it to her.

“Ma,” Taig warned.

Daisy studied it and gave it back.

“No, keep it!”

“Where’s Dad?”

“Looking for a parking space.”

The Taigs were art collectors and had made hundreds of studio visits.

Daisy held out the brooch saying, “Thank you for letting me see this.”

“Let me pin it on you.”

Daisy Summerfield's Art

She attached it to Daisy's shirt and said, "Now you look perfect. Now *it* looks perfect."

Daisy's phone rang.

It was Taig's father asking them to come down.

•

"We'll go to The Pierre," Harrietta cried as they approached the beautiful car.

Henry Senior, a head shorter than his wife and son, got out and embraced Daisy.

Then she and Taig were in the back seat, riding through Central Park.

"I don't have a jacket," Taig said.

Daisy wore jeans everywhere, but the large silver brooch made her feel like a sheriff.

"We'll get a suite and have room service," Harrietta called over the leather upholstery.

•

The China Doll

Henry Senior put his napkin on the table and took Daisy's hand.

"Who is your favorite artist?"

"Degas." She pictured a dancer waiting to go in front of the footlights.

"Really?"

"He's the most modern painter and the greatest sculptor. I like everything about him except—"

"Dreyfus."

"No. I feel sorry for him there. Degas was old and honorable. He wanted France to be right. I hate his sonnets and the letters about the white horse.

"I know who you like: Joe De Leo."

"Do you know him?"

"Very well."

"How did you two meet?" Harrietta asked, and Daisy smiled in anticipation.

Taig didn't answer.

"I love the flea market," Daisy said.

Daisy Summerfield's Art

"So do I," cried Harrietta.

"And one day I bought a cup from a corpse."

"Fabulous."

"I asked if I could give him a dollar, and he nodded."

"That's great!"

"The next day I questioned her and knew I couldn't live without her," Taig said.

"I solved the crime!"

"What fun!"

"It was a famous cup."

Taig shook his head, saying, "We don't know that."

"A museum curator—"

"We don't know that either."

"He moved to Australia!"

"He's free to come back."

"But how did you solve the crime?" Henry asked.

"Do you remember the cup that was stolen from James Rose Antique China?"

The China Doll

“Was that the cup?” asked Harrietta.

“Yes, and I accidentally knocked out the killer with one of my sculptures.”

“That increases its value,” Henry said. “Did you tell Alan?”

“He would rather I were carving. I’ve solved five crimes, and the criminal—”

“How do you choose the criminal?” asked Harrietta.

“It’s someone I dislike.”

“Perfect.”

“Is it true?” Henry asked. “Did you really solve five crimes?”

Taig moved his hand from side to side.

Henry said, “Do you know there is someone who copies your work?”

“Nancy Dick. I taught her to carve.”

“Pin a crime on her,” cried Harrietta. “Put her behind bars!”

“She was at the flea market last Sunday when a miniature doll was stabbed.”

Taig got up.

Daisy Summerfield's Art

Daisy stood too.

“How do you like your socks?” asked Henry.

He had seen above her boot tops the black hats of witches in an orange sky.

“Ha,” she said. “Taig Socks!”

•

She tried to unfasten the Calder. It was coiled silver wire flattened on an anvil.

The fastening pin wound around the silver wire had been brought through the spiral to close it.

She took out her books on Calder.

From the photos of his jewelry, she liked a rabbit's head formed by the initials *MC*.

The fastening pin was piano wire, she read.

If she were an engineer she would make steel-ribbed collapsible fabric sculptures.

She didn't tell Taig her idea as they washed and got into bed.

The China Doll

Staying well away from him, she imagined silk and taffeta sculptures supported by strips of bamboo.

•

Daisy saw stained white miniature china in a cardboard box. She counted three plates, two saucers, a sugar bowl, a cup, a pitcher, a platter, and three lids.

The lids were as fluted and crusty as seashells.

She paid for them all and was leaving the booth when she saw a thick blue bottle.

Shakespeare was sitting in a chair, holding a book and a pen.

To his right a sleeping cherub rested an arm on a mask of tragedy. To his left a cherub held a comic mask.

Below them a narrow banner said, SHAKSPEARE / BORN APRIL / 23 / 1564.

On the reverse a winged hourglass proclaimed, "All the world's a stage."

•

Daisy Summerfield's Art

“Look,” Daisy told Taig. “This is so old it has a groove for a cover to be tied on!”

It was four inches tall and had a masculine shape—wide shoulders tapering to the base.

An old chip on the bottom revealed a light gray body coated with blue powder.

She picked it up and put her tongue to it. It felt grainy. It had stayed dirty.

She felt a pull on her saliva.

“Don’t do that!” Taig said.

She tapped it and heard a sharp metallic ring.

In 1756 porcelain was being made in Liverpool, she read in *Pottery and Porcelain*.

“The Printed Ware Manufactory decorated pottery from different factories,” she read aloud, “and made the glassy porcelain formerly called Longton Hall.”

Resting her chin on her arms, she gazed at the printed transfer.

The China Doll

A lighted oil lamp stood on an hourglass. "ALL" was printed on the hourglass where the sand had run out.

"THE WORLD'S" was on the left. "A STAGE", was on the right.

Above it on a boarded globe were the seven ages: first the infant in a harness, then the schoolboy, then the lover, then the soldier on his horse.

Going down the arc was a man carrying a closed book, a man wearing spectacles and walking with a cane, and last, a very old man, half offstage on the right, balanced the nurse's hands coming from the curtain on the left.

Daisy said, "I don't know the last three ages, or which play it's in."

"It's As You Like It.

"That's the justice full of wise saws and modern instances, then the pantaloons,

his big manly voice

Turning again toward childish treble, pipes

And whistles in his sound.

Daisy Summerfield's Art

Last scene of all,
That ends this strange eventful history,
Is second childishness and mere oblivion,
Sans teeth, sans eyes, sans taste, sans everything.”

•

“You never told me why you joined the police force,” she said as they walked up Broadway.

“It seemed like a good thing to do.”

“Did I tell you I had read about it?”

“Want to eat here?”

They entered a new seafood restaurant.

“I don't even know what you majored in at Harvard. English, I guess.”

“That's right.”

“Do you pay for a meal like this with your salary?”

“Yes.”

“What were the steps in becoming a detective lieutenant?”

The China Doll

“I went from recruit to patrolman. Do you really want to hear all the grades?”

“You were a patrolman?”

“What did you think?”

“How long will you be a detective lieutenant?”

“Six years.”

“Then what?”

“Chief of Detectives. Police Commissioner.”

The walls and floor were tiled in white like a restaurant in New Orleans.

He said, “You want city employees to live here. Maybe I can make that happen.”

Daisy loved New York. She had developed her art on its stage.

Influenced by the cold fishy smell, she waved to the State Assemblyman who lived in her building.

•

The stout red-haired dealer was setting up her booth.

Daisy Summerfield's Art

"You're Nancy's friend," she said, and held up a hand to silence Daisy.

"Be careful with that box!" she told Scottie.

"I'm being careful, Mother."

Scottie set down the box and went out to the street.

"May I see the doll that was damaged?"

"Wait till I'm set up."

"Did you bring it?"

"I don't know." She went to the fence and called, "Don't forget to lock it!"

"Everything I have is a wreck. I get things to see what it's like to own them."

"Come back later," the dealer said as a woman in a brown coat approached. "I'll give you a good price."

•

"Did you get the doll?"

"Yes."

Taig was being kind.

The China Doll

“Is it here?”

She took it from her china cabinet and showed it to him.

“You bought this from Helen Smith?”

“How do you know her name?” She turned the key and reopened the cabinet.

“Helen died this afternoon.”

“Was she broken up in a football match?”

“She was murdered.”

He was trying to make amends by giving Daisy something she'd like—a murder at the flea market.

She could “work” with Sam.

But she wasn't interested.

•

Nancy Dick called. She said her friend Scottie was being questioned by the police.

Daisy took the doll from her cabinet, and a few grains of sawdust drifted to her oak parquet floor.

Daisy Summerfield's Art

She had been given some tiny old needles by a girl called Tamar Taylor.

The packet was one inch long, half an inch wide. She unfolded the black paper and selected a needle.

At last she tugged it out.

She had skeins of silk thread from a time when she wanted to do crewel work.

She took out the white and untwisted it.

She selected a thread, cut it next to the knot, pulled it until she could feel the other knot, and snipped.

She put one end in her mouth, squeezed her lips together, and pulled it through.

She aimed it at the eye of the needle.

It touched it and bent.

She wet the end, bit her lips together, pulled the thread through, and aimed it.

It approached the eye—and bent.

The China Doll

She wet the thread again, pressing it dry between her teeth, and set it down.

She had an old needle-threader.

Holding her cordless phone, she searched through her top desk drawer.

She looked on all her bookshelves.

She found it in the wallpaper-covered cardboard chest next to her bed.

“Are you listening, Daisy?”

She threaded the pointed wire loop and put the loop to the eye of the needle.

It was much too large.

She cut the frayed end, and sucked on it, pulling it past her closed front teeth.

She put it to the eye of the needle, thought she saw it go through, and jerked her hand and swore.

“They think she killed her!”

Daisy Summerfield's Art

She wet the thread again, aimed it at the eye of the needle, and brought it closer.

She saw a tiny fiber on the other side.

It was through. She pulled it farther. To be safe, she pulled it halfway.

“Tell me everything again,” she said, and set down her needle and listened.

At the end of the day when the market was closing and dealers drove their vans into the lot, someone had pulled out a gun and shot Helen Smith.

While everyone screamed, the killer escaped. No one had seen him or her.

•

Daisy pushed down the sawdust inside the doll's wound, and felt something.

The edges were neatly tucked in and she was ready to start.

Did she have to know what was in there?

The China Doll

On the point of her needle, instead of a message, she pulled up a wood shaving.

•

Starting with three tiny backstitches, Daisy sewed up the tear with a stitch called overcasting.

She ended with three tiny backstitches and cut the thread.

Then she cut up a T-shirt, folded it, laid the doll on it, and traced a sleeveless dress.

She cut out the two sides together, basted the seams, and tried it on her.

•

The doll's head, arms, and legs, were sewn to a cloth body.

Even a miniature, china-headed doll had warmth and dignity. Daisy thought children would be happier if they were kept clean and quiet and played with things that had value.

She remembered a line of clothing she designed.

It began with a cotton undershirt and pants or skirt to sleep in.

Daisy Summerfield's Art

Come morning, having bathed the night before, you would wash up and add the outer garments.

The skirts and pants would have soft elastic waists, but the tops would not have fasteners.

Women would use brooches to close them, as the Plains Indians had done.

They could be worn tight or loose.

The cotton knits would come in four colors: beige, antique pink, light blue, and black.

Seasonal colors would be added, as well as prints of cottages, ballerinas, and musicians.

The doll wore high-button shoes, so her skirts would come to just above the ankle.

•

Daisy started searching for a *New Yorker* profile of Georgia O'Keeffe she knew she had kept.

It described the "uniforms" O'Keeffe designed for herself.

The China Doll

Calder had made jewelry for his sister's doll, and she would make some for hers.

She started sorting through her charms:

Mr. Peanut

ice skates

a baseball bat, glove, and ball

a Chinese lantern

a skull

a primitive idol

binoculars

a spark plug

a jackknife

a boxing glove

a white bulldog wearing a gold collar

a white bulldog with no legs

a skeleton missing an arm and a leg

a compass

a white glass mouse with minuscule bulging red eyes

Daisy Summerfield's Art

a photo of Gene Autry

a photo of Roy Rogers and Dale Evans

a House & Garden magazine that had a lakeside theme

a harmonica

an ocean liner

a ring toss game inside a plastic jug

a megaphone

a silver baby carriage containing a velvet blanket and quintuplets

a 78 rpm Columbia record, YOUR HEART'S TURN TO BREAK,
Marty Robbins, flip side, OUT BEHIND THE BARN, Dickens

a chartreuse hand dipping a chocolate covered donut into a cup of
coffee

a souvenir book containing five photos of Llandudno

a can opener

a horseshoe

four perfume bottles, two LILAC & two VIOLET

a lobster

a smiling green dog

The China Doll

a roller skate

•

Daisy was surprised to see Helen Smith's miniatures at the flea market.

"I'm sorry about your mother," she told Scottie.

Scottie said, "She loved an old woman's teddy bear more than me. She gave it gifts and had tea parties for it."

"Why did your mother have her bear?" That old woman might be the murderer!

"She sold it to her. She was afraid when she died he wouldn't get a good home."

Daisy thought, I have to see this bear.

If he was cute, she wanted him.

Killers were infantile. It must have been someone who collected these things.

"I'm sorry about your mother," lisped a woman in a brown wool coat.

Daisy Summerfield's Art

“She sold me a tea set for eighty-five dollars. A girl in my miniatures club showed me where Japan was filed off.”

“Do you have the receipt?”

“No, dear. It's in Florida.”

“You must be freezing,” Daisy said. “I wish I lived in Florida and belonged to a miniatures club.”

“You can't just join our club. We have to vote on your collection and miniature scenes.”

The market manager came toward them. Daisy stretched her mouth. Get the police, she tried to convey to him.

The woman in the brown coat was saying, “I have that little bookcase. I made books for mine and won first prize.”

Daisy went to the pay phone on the corner and the woman from Florida vanished.

Daisy showed her stamped hand and walked up and down the aisles looking for her.

“That was Mrs. Tate,” Scottie said. “I have to look up the sale and call her.”

The China Doll

•

“I don’t need your help,” Nancy Dick said. “I wanted to know if your boyfriend told you anything.”

“I’ve solved crimes.”

“You’re unbelievable! I can’t believe you think you’ve solved crimes!”

“If someone says don’t get on that plane, it’s going to crash, how do you think they know?”

“They can see into the future.”

“It’s not the future. It’s the past. Everything has already happened.

“Where would a new thing come from? Where would an old thing go?”

“Artists learn to see it—and reveal it.”

•

Daisy was connected to Sam’s voice mail.

“Will you do me a favor? I want to buy something from an out-of-town dealer.

Daisy Summerfield's Art

“He doesn't answer the phone where he's staying. I need the address and apartment number.”

•

From a little blue book, *Sewing* by Jeanette Zarchy, Daisy had learned the backstitch, overcasting, and the blanket stitch.

“I think my mother likes me,” Daphne said.

“You married Alan! You have a doctorate!” Daisy sewed a little scallop.

“You never told me if your father hurt you.”

“Neither of my parents hurt me,” Daphne said.

“I don't mean physically. Fathers hurt their daughters by not taking them seriously.”

Daisy made another neat scallop. If one was bad, she had to pull it out and rethread the needle.

Daphne was dying to get off the phone. She had heard about the Calder and the murder at the flea market, and that led to this depressing topic.

And all the time she knew Daisy was doing something else.

The China Doll

“What are you doing?” she asked.

“Sewing a dress for the doll.”

“Are you going back to fashion?”

“Maybe Taig’s father will manufacture them. They’re cotton knits.”

“Do you want to have lunch Tuesday? We can meet at America.”

That would be great, because Daisy wanted to go to the Sculpture Shop and buy an anvil.

•

Taig came in while she was sewing.

Aware of the domestic picture she must make, she told him that Nancy Dick stabbed the doll.

“Have you told Sam?”

“She’s not a killer! I’d have to kill someone first!”

“I’m calling him. There are stiff penalties for impeding a murder investigation.”

•

Daisy Summerfield's Art

Daisy entered a red brick building in the east thirties, walked through a sunken lobby to the elevator, and told the porter, "Nine, please."

He closed the gate.

She rang the doorbell and heard footsteps.

Mrs. Tate said, "How did you find me?"

"I'd like to buy that tea set." Daisy wanted to give a party to welcome the bear.

She looked past Mrs. Tate, clapped her hands, and cried, "It's miniature!"

"It's my friends' pied-à-terre. They use it when they come in to the city.

"I just made some of my delicious orange muffins to leave for them."

"You can take off your coat and have one. I'll put on some water," she said, going to the tiny galley kitchen.

Daisy saw her open a cupboard.

She smelled chemicals.

The China Doll

The smell increased as Mrs. Tate brought muffins to the table.

“How did you make those in that tiny kitchen?”

“I can make my muffins anywhere, but I did have to use oven cleaner.

“I’m going to tell Elsie her cleaning person doesn’t do a good job.”

Daisy’s eyes were tearing. She found a tissue in her jeans and blew her nose.

She chose a muffin, saying, “I’ll take it with me.”

At first she thought Mrs. Tate was pointing at her with a silvery old finger.

Daisy had watched her open her purse and assumed she needed a nail buff.

•

She got a cab down to 18th Street, ran up the steps to America, and over to Daphne’s table.

She took off her jacket and dipped her napkin in her water glass and scrubbed her hands.

An accident? Saw an accident? Traffic caused by an accident?

Daisy Summerfield's Art

"What's wrong with you?" asked Daphne.

"I feel scattered. I see too many people."

"You don't see any people."

"I had coffee with Taig's old partner, Sam Wackhamer. Isn't that a great name for a sculptor?"

"He's a cop. Don't romanticize him."

"I'm not!"

"You said you want to marry him!"

Daisy took a trembling sip of coffee. "I was fighting with a woman who had a gun.

"Then I had to wait for the police.

"When I held the gun on her, the feeling was sexual. I had the power to blow her away. Now I see why sex and violence go together. People are disgusting."

She turned green.

•

There was a children's bookshop near the subway exit.

The China Doll

The local had come right away, and the express was waiting at 72nd Street.

Daisy said, "Let's get books for Sam's daughters." There wasn't time to get them wrapped.

She and Taig climbed the steps to America, pulled open a door, and went in.

"Daisy!" shrieked Linda Leone. "Listen to what happened to me at the framer. You know how they take hours making you choose every element?"

"I love the way they talk about the life of paper."

"It's bullshit! I'm waiting months for my prints. Finally I get them. They look strange. Why? They used the wrong glazing. Why? They couldn't get the one I chose."

"Why didn't they call you?"

"I said, why didn't you call me?"

"I'm the only one who noticed, and they don't think they can make me happy."

Daisy Summerfield's Art

Maria and Sam's two little girls were playing on the platform at the far end of the room.

"Darlene is beautiful," Daisy told Maria. "Look at how graceful she is."

"Sam says you solved another case. You should have been a cop," Maria said.

"I'm going back to sculpting. There's an old kind of theater the puppeteer wore over his head."

She thought of the Calder and peered into the V of her sweater vest.

It was too valuable to leave in her apartment, too distinctive to wear on her sweater.

"What is that?" asked Maria.

Daisy stretched the V and showed it to her.

"That's nice."

Suddenly Darlene was at her side.

"What's nice, Maria?"

"Daisy's pin."

The China Doll

“Let me see!”

Fat little hands tore at Daisy’s jeans, and a pudgy foot in a dirty shoe dug into her thigh.

Daisy showed it to Carmel.

Her little nose got red. Her mouth turned down. “Give it to me. Give - it - to - meeeeeeee!”

“I can’t.” Clutching her, Daisy reached down for the bag.

“We brought you and your sister books. Look, it’s a story about a teapot.”

Carmel slapped them out of her hand.

Holding on to Carmel, Daisy picked up the books and opened *Sally the Teapot*.

Carmel snatched at an illustrated page and tore it.

“Darlene,” Daisy said, her face warm from leaning over, “we got you one about a paper doll.”

“I don’t really like books,” Darlene said.

“I’ve never seen you with kids.” Myron Kantrowitz, a metal sculptor, kissed Daisy.

Daisy Summerfield's Art

"I waaant it," sobbed Carmel.

"She wants my brooch. Taig's mother gave it to me. It's a Calder."

"I want it too!"

"GIVE IT TO MEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEE," Carmel screamed.

Many people there had worse children and should have been inured to the sound, but some looked annoyed.

"Hey kid. Take a look." Myron set the tines of two forks together and stood them up.

Carmel started to reach for them and Maria said, "I think she'll be a sculptor."

1996

We arrived at Camp Ojiketa at 10:15.

I have a bunk under Miriam. everyone has gum and candey and we are all chewing. We had spagitti for Lunch, Stew for dinner. We talked till about 2 hours after taps.

We woke up today at 8:30 this morning and talked till nine. it rained so hard that we couldn't ride horseback. I started a coin purse at crafts today. For dinner we had cream salmon. We got to bed at 11:00.

Daylight was fading as Daisy sat in her Upper West Side studio reading *Diary of a Camp Fire Girl*.

She didn't remember the little red and blue book, but her name, Campfire name ("Owa, to paint, sketch"), and Symbol (hand, eye) were on the first page.

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Daisy Summerfield's Art

Nature notes—

We went on a Hunt to find Mosquito's Breeding place. We found it at the C.T.

We were all tired so we woke up real Late. We folked danced in the Lodge and had Some Terrible tasting Orange Punch or Something. We had Some Spagattie for dinner.

We got up at 7:30. I had 3 oranges for Breakfast. We went to church at 10:00. The Biggest Island I ever saw floated in. I went riding at 4-5:00. We had a ambition party. We had Bloney for diner. Bed-11:00.

We got up at about 7:30 'cause I sneezed. We had a hike, Saw a 15 min. old cow. at night we had an auction. We took Lodge duty. We had stew for dinner.

The Covered Jar

We got up at 7:45. After we cleaned our cabin we went to handicraft.

Nature notes—

We went on a Nature Hike and Saw a 15 min. old Calf Learn to stand up. He did it in about half an hour.

•

“You still haven’t met our intern from Dewey. Her winter work term is almost over,” Daphne said. “She’s writing her senior thesis on your work.”

“What year is she?” asked Daisy.

“Lara’s a freshman.”

“Where is she from?”

“California. She’s staying with her grandmother on Park Avenue.”

“I suppose you know her grandmother.”

“No. Why?”

Daisy envied the privileged young girl.

“She can help you with your papers.”

“They’re private!”

Daisy Summerfield's Art

"You still have to meet her."

Daisy unpacked crayon and charcoal drawings she had made as a child.

She found diaries from her first two years of high school, starting January 1, 1955.

Back to school tomorrow! After two terrific weeks of vacation, it seems pretty tough, but still, it'll be great to get back to Central High. I'm a Freshman there. I guess I'm still worn out from New Years, 'cause I lost my temper about 3 times today. Once mom slapped me for it. She's always wanted to, I guess, but this was the 1st time she's ever gotten around to it! Oh-h was I ever MAD! I talked on the 'phone all day today, besides drawing a map for Civics. I didn't go down to the Bowling Alley, but the kids said they saw Larry there!

Daisy read tensely, hoping she had been intelligent.

The Covered Jar

Well, it was great to get back to school, even though it wasn't too great to start in with homework again! I have 10 algebra problems and some Civics. I drive all my teachers crazy, 'cause I talk so much, but they can't do too much about it, besides giving me U's, and they don't!

You could never, in a million years, guess what happened to me tonite! All of a sudden, while we were eating, I remembered my map that I'm supposed to hand in to Mr. Gerspach tomorrow, for Civics. I realized that I had left it at school. So-o, at 6:30 Daddy drove me down to Central. Only the basement door was open, so daddy 'n I climbed 4 flights of stairs in the dark, found my locker, and opened the combination by matchlite. It certainly was an experience, especially when you realize that daddy could've been arrested!

Daisy Summerfield's Art

Well, I handed my map in to Mr. Gerspach this morning. I sure hope I get an A for it, after all I went through last nite! Poor Daddy . . . If I don't get a good mark, he'll probably shoot me! We got out of school at 1:30 this afternoon, but most of the kids were at the symphony, so I didn't do anything.

•

Daphne had told Lara she could work at Daisy's apartment sorting old papers.

Now she had to disappoint her.

"I don't want to see her personal things," Lara said. "I just like her sculpture."

Her brown eyes and curly blond hair reminded Daphne of a young Daisy Summerfield.

•

Do you know what Larry did a few days ago!!! He got mad at me on the 'phone, 'cause I didn't understand a joke. So he said I should be playing marbles instead of talking to boys on

The Covered Jar

the phone! I told him I'd be very happy to, but I didn't have any. The next day, he gave me 4 marbles. Now it's a fad! I think half the boys in Central have presented me with MARBLES! The recent count is—142!

I'm reading a marvelous book now, called "Curtain Going Up." it's a really great book about Katharine Cornell—I've always wanted to be an actress! either that or an artiste! At any rate, I want to be famous!

We gave a skit about Egypt today in Mr. Gerspachs room. He really thought it was terrific! Oh well—there's no accounting for strange tastes!

Bowled practically all day today. Everyone goes down to "Lucky Lanes" on Sundays! Everyone says I was just awful to Gary, but I don't think I was!

Daisy Summerfield's Art

Just guess what happened at U High today! See— Gary took this picture of me from Mary's house. It's one of me acting silly, but anyway . . . they flashed it on the t-v system they have in the classrooms. It was on the screen for 'bout 5 min! Everyone's been calling me like mad! It is really pretty funny though, if you just think about it for a while— Just 'magine! It may be the start of my T-V career—hah!

We had confirmation again after school. It's really very interesting. We discuss God and his existence, and learn to understand our Jewish prayers and customs! For next week, we have to write a theme on: "PROOF THAT I EXIST."

Daisy remembered a confirmation gift she received, a white covered jar with raised decoration.

Could it have been chinoiserie?

The Covered Jar

We had an awful test in BAND today, about scales, minor + major. I know I failed, so I'm not even thinking about it!

We had an assembly today, on SNO-DAY, which is tomorrow. We get to wear pants to school, and we get excused at 12:00 noon, to go out to Powder Horn park, for skiing, skating, etc.

Well . . . It was 19 below zero, so we decided not to go to SNO-DAY, but we got out of school early anyway. Oh well— If I'm expelled for skipping school, 800 others will be, too!

I got a darling pair of Kickerinos today! (real "HOODY") I got some ski sweaters too, for the Sleigh Ride, but I'm going to return them . . .

Daisy Summerfield's Art

I talked to Gary tonight for a while—he still has my mittens and angora hat from the sleigh ride! You see, I wore his jacket that night, and forgot to take that stuff out of the pockets.

I got a precious dress today. A Lanz! It's just adorable, for fla. I still haven't found a dress for The Sno-Ball. I talked to Gary for a while, tonite . . . Thrill-thrill

I went downtown and had my hair cut in a "Sh-Boom." It's sort of motly! I had a marvelous time tonight. I didn't care for the movie too much, but . . . it was fun anyhow! (The movie was "Under Water" with Jane Russell) Afterwards, we went to Road Buddy's and had ribs—ugh!

I went downtown after school, and got a horsehair slip, a precious blouse, high heels, and pearl earrings. Mommy almost flipped, but she did let me keep everything.

The Covered Jar

•

While sipping tea from a plastic cup, Daisy read the second volume of her diaries.

I went to the dentists at 8:00 this morning. Susie was up there too, and we went shopping after we had our work done. We went to absolutely every store in St. Paul, and all I got was a slip, sox, + a blouse! I lost Mum's cashmere sweater!! Wow!

I'm going out with Neil again Wednesday nite . . . We're going to see Blackboard Jungle. Um-m. Can't wait! (to see the movie that is)

Today was modeling—I take on Tues. and Thurs. at Comptons. We had an uneventful ride down on the bus (usually, it's hilarious) once this Bug flew on a lady - and - oh! Skip it! Anyway, today we had makeup first; that was really

Daisy Summerfield's Art

interesting . . . Well . . . not too, but I had'a make it sound good. Then we had studio, and then wardrobe. Those wardrobe classes are nauseating. All we do is take notes on how to wash bra's, how to fit girdles, etc. Ugh!

I had such a swell time last nite. the movie was stupendous! Absolutely the mostest! I've never seen such a great movie. We went to a new drive-in, "Pearsons" - It'll take all the business away from "Flat top" and "Airloha." I sure could like Gary again - I used to have so much fun when I went with him. I went with Larry too - Neil hasn't called . . .

I walked down to "Fines" (record store) and got "Story Untold" by the Crew-cuts! Wow! is that ever terrific . . .

Oh- Last nite, when I talked to Neil I realized that I didn't like him anymore . . . I really don't think we should go together- we aren't right for each other. We don't enjoy

The Covered Jar

doing the same things, etc. At a party fr'instance: I can be having a smash-up time, But Neil'll be bored, and will mope around all eve. Oh- I don't really understand it, but tonite I made it quite clear to him. I hope he understands and his feelings aren't hurt. Also I hope that Gar still likes me, and that we start going together again. We sure go gr-reat together.

I didn't do anything tonite, exept talk to Neil again, and try to make him understand . . .

A year or so later, Gary wrote from Wharton, "Physically, you're more beautiful than ever, and I seriously mean it. Mentally, you've matured."

The seat in front of her came back.

She said, "You're lying in my lap."

Daisy Summerfield's Art

Went to Cooks, (I got a darling Italian "t" shirt) Murphys', Jacksons. As usual, we saw the whole crowd of freshman girls down there . . . those kids! They're all over! I bought three records at "Fines." 'Ain't that a Shame,' 'Close the Door,' and 'House of Blue Lights.' They're all real good.

Mummy + I argued for 45 minutes because she found some cigarettes I smoked, and she doesn't want me to smoke! I don't very often, but most of the other kids do, and I enjoy it! I smoke on the average of 1/4 cig. a day! Which isn't at all bad . . .

Daisy leaned back and gazed out the window at the quivering silver wing of the plane.

I walked down to the libe today, to take out some books. Gene Jones took me home . . . We talked for a while, and then he peeled away, in his little orange chariot.

The Covered Jar

Well- first of all, I've never had such a fun time as I did to-
nite with Neil. the movie wasn't 'specially good ("The Man
from Laramie") I really don't know what was so grand, but
whatever it was . . . We went to the Flat top afterwards, of
course, and had a long satisfying conversation about every
little thing. I enjoy talking to him a lot. 'specially when he's in
a bad mood- Then he isn't real scarcastic . . .

Sandy 'n I ate at the drugstore, and then went home . . .
talked, read our new "True Confessions," etc.

This morning, I cleaned out my closet, bulletin board, and
desk drawers. Whew! Then I cleaned my desk drawers for a
second time (first was unsatisfactory according to Mom)
Mary drove over. We went to the drugstore got some junk
(Hot Coral Lipstick) and came home. Oh- We had a coke

Daisy Summerfield's Art

too, of course . . . I talked to Neil tonite. I guess he's coming over tomorrow, but I won't be home . . . heh-heh

Daisy told the woman on the aisle that she was going to St. Paul to get a French chinoiserie jar.

"What a fascinating career!" the woman exclaimed.

I went downtown today with Mums to get my little portable radio. it's 5" by 3", and so-o cute!! When I came home, I changed, grabbed my radio, and ran down to the libe. Oh- I'm reading "East of Eden" now, and it's just grand.

Oh! I got a just fabulous record . . . "Black Denim Trousers"!! I just love it.

It would be in her parents' basement, in a red leatherette carrying case of 45s she had indexed.

The Covered Jar

School started today! I got all crappy subjects, teachers, etc.

You know how it goes . . .

A crappy day! I feel like I've been going to school for years already. it's just sickening routine. We have to collect 25 bugs, 25 leaves, 25 weeds for Biol. I have just tons of homework every nite. Lunch is my only bright spot, + I get indigestion from that!

Daisy rose and said to the man behind her, "Will you stop kicking my seat?"

She didn't see the man next to him. Would she have recognized her high school art teacher?

School was really bad- I got a real good study in Art, but I fluffed . . . it didn't turn out the way I'd planned . . .

Daisy Summerfield's Art

Today was Sno Day- I get such a wierd feeling walking down the halls + seeing all the girls in downhill, bermudas, etc.

My! It's unbelievable, but school was worse than ever today. honestly! I just can not stand to take Art from Mr. French! he's an honest to goodness idiot!! besides looking like a gopher . . . ho hum . . . Well- I went to Ralph 'babe' after school and had my hair cut. What a relief! I looked like a zombie.

Got report cards en la escuela hoy, y ganno All O's in Wld. Hist!! Muy Bueno?!! Si!! I also got a measly O in Art, and the rest were S's.

We had a bad assembly, no second period tho, so I didn't care. Mr. French looks more + more like a gopher every day. Gosh but I hate him! "Darlene can be very discourteous at times". . . Duh-h-h.

The Covered Jar

We had a real fun time tonite. went to see 'I hear America Singing' at Central. It was extra fabulous!! After, we went to White Castle + it was just a panic, + Oh! We went to the High. theater for the last 15 minutes of the show . . . Gar said: "Let's walk in backwards and they'll think we're leaving." hm-m . . . Then we drove all over town + Gar let me steer. I ran up on a curb . . .

We had the most wonderful sub. in Biol. today! he was about 21, dark curly hair, glasses, buck teeth, etc. I'm in love-e!!!

We had more tests in Wld. Hist. today, and Mr. French wrecked one of my best watercolors. My, but I hate him!!

Daisy Summerfield's Art

Went to the Central-Wilson game tonite. We won 27-0! It was a swell game- Larry played 1st string! I was so proud of him.

O happy day! Donny asked me out for tomorrow nite. We had a test in Biology too, + I think I passed, because Dave really studied hard.

Donny called, I changed, Donny came over, we went to the movie. he gave me a big french poodle for my birthday . . . I love it! He came in for awhile when we got home, and I played my new Louis Armstrong for him.

The plane started its descent and Daisy looked down at the familiar landscape. She alone applauded as they landed with a bump.

She was out of her seat, exposed to the two men she had humiliated.

The Covered Jar

“Good luck with the jar,” said her seatmate, now standing behind her.

“Thanks.” Daisy quickly looked away.

She had seen Mr. French.

The new airport kept growing. She followed overhead signs to the cab stand.

Her parents always picked her up.

It was just a short ride.

“I’ll tell you where to stop. Right . . . here. It’s this house on the right.”

•

Daisy opened the kitchen door, found a can of mixed nuts, and went upstairs chewing.

The covered jar wasn’t in her bedroom so she went down the basement.

As she came upstairs again the phone rang and she hurried to pick up.

“Who is this?” asked a familiar voice.

Daisy Summerfield's Art

"Dad?"

"Wait. Did I call New York?"

Standing in her parents' bedroom, looking down at the street, she saw an old blue car.

She said, "I'm in St. Paul."

"What are you doing there?"

"Does one of your neighbors have an old blue car?"

"Not that I'm aware of."

"Do any of their kids have a friend who has an old blue car?"

"What's the temperature there?"

"It's freezing."

"Gosh, I thought I was losing my mind!"

"Why did you call here?"

"Just checking!"

He gave her mother the phone.

"Mom, may I have two of your old towels?"

"I'll send them to you when we get home."

The Covered Jar

“Do you remember a white covered jar Mrs. Price gave me that was on my bureau?”

“It was a pewter box.”

Daisy chose two towels and went downstairs.

In the basement she found another carton of her things. She was hoping find the candy box that contained a teenage paper doll she had made.

Upstairs she saw by the kitchen clock that her time was running out.

She opened the phone book trying to feel some emotion, but she hadn't lived here long.

Their old house in Mound, thirty miles to the west, was another story.

Blanche Nichols Wilson said in *Minnetonka Story*,

How often I heard “By the Waters of Minnetonka”
pouring from bus station and airport juke boxes during my

Daisy Summerfield's Art

visits in the South, I cannot say. Almost always the majority of the travelers who had given little heed to previous records, began to listen to the rippling of the waves and the longings of the human heart expressed in that pensive melody. One time a pretty WAC near me gave such a tremulous sigh that I asked by way of sympathy, "Where is Minnetonka?"

She gave me a sad look, grieved at my ignorance. "Oh, it isn't anywhere. It's just an imaginary place, sort of a Shangri-La, you know."

Daisy had made the teenage paper doll at the dining table on the porch.

Years later, inspired by playing Solitaire on her cell phone, she invented four rectangular dolls.

Their clothes were dealt three at a time. The object was to outfit all four dolls.

The Covered Jar

She ran down again and got her old slam books and a little blue flight bag.

Her cab drove up.

The back door was locked. She locked the front door and went down the icy walk.

She thought she saw an old blue car when she turned around in the cab for a last look at the house.

•

There was a woman in the middle of her row. She had a bandaged foot and a cane.

“Would you like the window seat?” asked Daisy.

“No. I ask for the middle seat. If I’m on the wrong side of the aisle, my foot gets kicked.”

Daisy opened a bin and put in the flight bag and her jacket.

“Aren’t you Darlene Summerfield?”

“Yes!”

The woman looked familiar.

Daisy Summerfield's Art

"I don't know if you remember me from Central. I'm Carol Hanson."

The former Sno Queen was the same as when she said hi to everyone in the halls of Central.

"Welcome aboard Northwest flight . . . to La Guardia. Our flying time today will be two hours and thirty-five minutes."

"How did you hurt your foot?" Daisy asked. "Is it an old cheerleading injury?"

"No, I had surgery. Our daughter's a dancer with the New York City Ballet."

"Who did she study with?"

"Katy Parker."

"I took ballet from her!"

"She said she couldn't teach her after she turned twelve."

"What did you do?"

"Kathy and I moved to Chicago, and my husband and son stayed here."

The Covered Jar

(They were flying above the clouds. By “here,” Carol meant St. Paul.)

“When she was fifteen, we let her go to the School of American Ballet.

“I’ve been going on and on, and you haven’t told me about yourself,” Carol said.

“There’s nothing to tell.”

The short man in the row ahead disagreed. He had seen the little flight bag.

“Are you married?”

“No.”

If Daisy had mentioned Taig, things might have been different.

I went downtown today, to see the “Benny Goodman” story.

It was fabulous! The music was . . . the plot wasn’t so hot

(hah-hah) that rymed!! I’m so original tonite.

Daisy Summerfield's Art

School's getting just ridiculous!! I have to stay after school for Mr. French tomorrow, and I think I'll tell him exactly what I think of him . . . My name'll be on the Suspension list Friday, probably . . . I hate that man (not man, mouse or rat is more like it)

I had to stay after for Mr. French today. he gave me a big lecture about how I'm wasting my glor-rious talent in art, and how much better I'd be if I worked instead of fooling around with Bill and Tom. Phooey!

Gosh but I hate school! Only 103 days left, counting weekends. I'll live. Stan + I counted the days in Biol today, 'cause we had nothing better to do.

I had another whopperoo of a fight with Mr. French 'babe,' + did a really good portrait of Margie in art today. no matter

The Covered Jar

how Mr. French hates me, he has to give me a 4+ on it!! he just has to . . .

“What were you doing in St. Paul? Do your folks still live there?”

“Yes,” Daisy said as the plane landed.

She saw Eustace French open a bin and take her flight bag.

“Thank you for choosing Northwest.”

As if we had a choice, she always thought.

“Excuse me,” she called to the young man sitting next to Carol.

“Someone took my bag!”

The line in the aisle started moving. The young man got up and broke into it.

“Will you let me out?” she asked Carol. “It was nice seeing you,” she said, getting her jacket.

According to *People*, Dolly Parton was always in airports and was very short and friendly.

Daisy tried to see her.

Daisy Summerfield's Art

The crowd parted and she saw a blonde in jeans and a black sweater lying on the industrial carpet.

Daisy accosted an officer.

“What’s the problem?” he asked.

“I think I know who did it.”

He shook his head. “It’s drug-related.”

•

Taig thought it was drug-related.

“Why can’t you believe my high school art teacher killed someone he thought was me?”

He stared, trying to figure her out.

•

Buy and donate. Buy and donate. Paula Conrad cut a swath through the material world.

In every corner of the city where she taught reading, she found a store and bought something.

“How’s your work?” she asked Lara, as they sat down to dinner.

“Fine.”

The Covered Jar

“Are they giving you good things to do?”

She helped herself to Mushroom Stroganoff and passed the platter to Lara.

“I’m still cleaning out old files. They let me keep a lot of neat stuff.”

“Isn’t this wonderful?”

“You’re so cool, being vegan.”

“It’s cool for the animals.”

“What was Philip Kodaly like?”

“Very stern like Mondrian. Did you know he was there when Summerfield had her first show?”

“Yes. I wish I’d never mentioned her. Daphne keeps bugging her about me.”

“Sweetheart, I don’t know Daphne, but she does what she wants to do.

“And Summerfield will do what she wants to do. I could invite her here.”

“You didn’t know her at Dewey.”

“She can come for potato latkes and see her *Gettysburg Witness*.”

Daisy Summerfield's Art

“Does she know you have it?”

Paula had excused herself and was searching the bookshelves.

“Back then we used an agent.

“Here,” she said. “Wipe your hands. This is the catalog for her first show.”

Lara took the four-page booklet and opened it.

Daisy Summerfield, born in Mound, Minnesota on Dec. 21, 1940, attended Dewey College in Vermont before coming to New York.

There was a photo of her in a striped Mexican blouse and dangly silver earrings.

“Everyone says they have to show me,” she was quoted as saying. “Easterners think Minnesota is Missouri!”

Paula, reading with Lara, said, “That happened to me, too.”

The Covered Jar

“Really, Grandma?”

“Sweetheart, could you call me Paula? I don’t like a generic name at my age.

“There were two Daisy Summerfields in my class. Marguerite was my first roommate. She spent the semester typing air mail letters to England on a Baby Hermes.

“I went to her wedding in Boston that summer. She wore the Spanner tiara and became Lady Spanner. I still hear from her, and she’s still very happy!”

•

On one of the tables in a large booth in the center of the antiques lot, Daisy found a white covered jar decorated with raised prunus blossom.

Daisy was surprised to see bronze rims on the lid and the mouth of the jar.

Holding the tiny knob, she removed the lid and put it back. It fit perfectly.

Daisy Summerfield's Art

The red color in the cracks in the old white paste was a type of restoration.

Large initials, *D, V*, were incised on the bottom.

She bought it for fifteen dollars.

When she was leaving the booth she saw a white porcelain rooster but didn't ask the price.

•

Daisy found the initials in W.B. Honey's *French Porcelain*: "Incised (2)
Usual mark, about 1740-70."

The mark 'D V' (for 'de Villeroy') was used from the beginning on Villeroy porcelain. It was at first, apparently for a short time, painted, sometimes in blue (like Saint Cloud), more often in red (like Chantilly). For the most part, however, it was incised in the paste, sometimes accompanied by the initials of throwers or 'repairers'.

She examined hers, and saw two curved Cs back to back.

The Covered Jar

It was not registered as a mark with the police authorities until 1773, when Jullien and Jacques at the same time registered the 'B R' of their new factory.

A number of other incised marks occurring on rather similar porcelain should be mentioned here. 'D, C, O' and 'D, C, P' (separated by commas, as in the usual form of Menecy mark)...

The rare Menecy specimens with the Saint-cloud blue lambrequins and the plain white pieces with plum-blossom (3) and other reliefs of the same derivation are to be distinguished by the glaze and a kind of feminine delicacy that shows itself in the forms of the tiny knobs of lids and in other ways.

Fig. 922 in *Pottery and Porcelain* by Cox showed a jar like it.

Daisy Summerfield's Art

Here we see that even in the early days of the 18th century creative spirit had become so atrophied that factory copied factory and there was no slightest respect for the rights of personal design or desire to cultivate it. One small bright idea was dragged from place to place until it was worn to pieces.

Long after Bottger had made real hard porcelain and its secret had been stolen by other German-speaking centers the French continued to make soft paste although it is much less serviceable. It chips easily, is likely to crack in hot water and was difficult to handle in the kiln.

•

Lara was admiring Daisy's *Gettysburg Witness* in her grandmother's living room.

"Did you know she solves crimes? The Kodaly's hate it because the criminals are curators or dealers."

The Covered Jar

Paula laughed. “No, I didn’t know, but if I were still painting, I’d have it in for them, too!”

“But don’t you think she has really deep reasons for doing it?”

“Laraleh—”

“What did you call me?”

“I hope you’re writing the things you say. They’re good insights for your paper.”

“Melanie’s writing about it.

“I can’t wait to read it. She said—I don’t know what to call her. They call her Daisy—”

“So call her Daisy.”

“She’s solved six crimes, and she’s never been married or had children.”

“If your mother hadn’t had you, I don’t know what I’d do. You’re a better miracle than this.”

Paula thought, There’s more than one way to make something fine and modern.

Daisy Summerfield's Art

"We were lucky to get this," she said. "Our first two choices were sold.

"*Spottiswood* had two peaks and was spotted with black paint. The other was a marble column with a pointed roof, and on the roof it said *Grant*.

"I thought that was her best show—Riverside Park."

"I'm so lucky to have a cool grandma."

"Your real grandma was cool. Before I came here I had never seen a modern apartment or met parents who were real people.

"Oggie got up early Sunday mornings and cabbied to the west side for bagels.

"One day it rained and he sat here making a list of films. He would cab from one to another."

"Is that why you fell in love with him?"

"I would never fall in love with a married man!"

"He fell in love with you."

"He came to one of my shows after Liz died."

The Covered Jar

And she stepped into a life she couldn't have imagined if she hadn't gone to Dewey.

The Yiddish endearment she had used brought her own grandparents vividly to mind.

They had sold their house at the lake and moved to California in the early 1950s.

•

Daphne walked along a damp path amid bare trees on the campus of Chubb Institute.

She opened her office, set down her briefcase, and pressed Play on her answering machine.

She removed her coat and hung it up while listening to her messages.

A woody voice said, "Daphne?"

If I were a bunny

with a tail of fluff

I'd hop up on your dresser

Daisy Summerfield's Art

and be your powder puff.

Daphne rewound the tape and called Alan.

“What is that?” he asked.

“Daisy’s been going through old papers. Isn’t that a sweet message?”

She hoped he wasn’t jealous. “She can’t say she wants to be *your* powder puff.”

“I guess not.”

“Sorry I’m late, Dr. Kodaly,” said her first tutee.

•

Every evening when Lara came home from the gallery, Paula put down a book.

Rising from the sofa she’d say, “Wash up, and we’ll see what Nancy made us for dinner.”

Instead of worrying about restaurant food, she had vegetarian meals prepared at home.

The Covered Jar

Nancy Warren could have organized charities or started a business, but she liked cooking.

“It’s no good if people who work for you envy you. Everyone should have money so they can work for the joy of it.”

“That would be art,” Lara said.

“Nancy Warren is an artist and we’re privileged to eat her good food.

“She has more money than I do, and on top of that, I pay her well.”

•

Taig and Daisy went to find the rooster.

“That’s him!” she hissed at Taig.

“Good.”

“The man who stole my bag!” She punched Taig’s arm.

“JESUS!” he cried.

Sadly she paid for the rooster.

Staring down at some blurred objects, she felt him approach and said, “Sorry.”

“No need.”

Daisy Summerfield's Art

Mr. French started pulling on her bag.

“What are you doing?” she yelled.

“Police!” she heard Taig shout.

•

She awoke on the floor of the parking attendant's hut next to the entrance to the flea market.

As a lover of Chinese and Japanese poetry, she looked around with interest.

“Is the rabbit in my bag?” she asked Taig.

“Is that what you got?”

It would be her sole ornament. Like Ryokan with his vase, she would keep it dust free.

•

Throughout the week our characters were like Su Tung-P'o's “little stars busy as boiling water” [*Selected Poems of Su Tung P'o* translated by Burton Watson].

Taig questioned Daisy's old art teacher and let him return to St. Paul; Daphne wrote, “It was a joy to have Lara Cooper at the gallery. In

The Covered Jar

cleaning out old files, she demonstrated real understanding of the relationship between art, academics, and trade;" and Lara arranged her ride back to school.

•

Daisy was making a slam book.

She turned over the first page of an unused sketchbook and wrote at the top of the second page, **Favorite sculpture, & sketch it if you can.**

The heading for the next page was, **Favorite painting, & sketch it if you can.**

Favorite song

Best kind of music

Bach and Buddy Holly, she wrote.

What kind of soap do you use?

Brand of toothpaste?

Your favorite shampoo + your hair type

Have you ever had a great haircut? Where and when?

Are you doing what you set out to do?

Daisy Summerfield's Art

No, she wrote. I was going to be an actor!

What are your favorite clothes?

Favorite photographer

Lee Friedlander: "Wade Ward's Granddaughters"

If you could choose your talent, what would it be?

Do you have a cat? What's his or her name?

Do you have a dog? Name, please.

Would you rather make money or inherit money? Please be thoughtful & give reasons.

Who is your favorite author?

Do you wear glasses? Draw the frame & note color(s).

Where do you live?

If you could move, where in NYC would you like to live?

Are you a native New Yorker? If not, where are you from?

•

"Did you know Daisy was a Commercial Girl in high school?"

"She isn't now," Alan said.

The Covered Jar

“It was a line of pretty girls wearing dresses with crinolines chanting commercials.

“I told Lara we’d pick her up, but she went to Reminiscences.

“There she is! What did you get?” Daphne cried, getting out of the cab in front of America.

•

Daisy stopped at a table. “Write in my slam book.”

“What’s a slam book?”

“Just follow my example,” she said, as Taig pressed her shoulder.

Daphne, Alan, and a young blonde were waiting for them. Daphne introduced them.

Daisy picked up her menu and said, “Lulu King and Rudy Shayne are writing in my slam book.

“Instead of taking a number, you choose a shape and draw it around your answers.

“I have to see if they’re doing it right,” she said, and got up and left.

Taig tried to excuse her.

Daisy Summerfield's Art

“One of her old high school teachers was on the plane back from St. Paul.

“She thinks he tried to shoot her.”

Daisy sat down.

“Are you mad at me?” she asked Alan. “This is how I acted in high school.”

“No wonder your teacher tried to shoot you.”

The more she willed herself not to cry in front of the young intern, the more painfully her eyes smarted.

“I apologize,” Alan said. “Why were you in St. Paul? I hope your parents are all right.”

“They’re in Florida.”

Rudy had drawn phalluses around his answers. He couldn’t draw, but the shape was unmistakable.

Lulu tried to counteract him by outlining a Christmas angel.

Under “Best Haircut” she had written inside her angel, “On the beach at Nice, winter of ’75, 5 fr.”

The Covered Jar

Rudy's best haircut, inside the phallus, was, "When I was on *Guiding Light* in the 60s."

Daisy's triangle said "Jon-Allen, Bendel, Dec. 1975, Jean Louis David was giving free haircuts."

On the page headed **What do you think of the owner of this book?** Rudy wrote, "A cool chick."

•

I went to modeling today at 1:30. My first professional class . . . fun! By the end of summer I'll be a full fledged professional model! The girls in my class are nice.

I went to modeling today & guess what? I got a job!! Modeling at Donaldson's for the Aquatennial! \$1.50 an hour, & Mom bought me a beautiful models hat box at Daytons . . .

•

"There she is!" cried Lara.

Stephanie drove down Park, turned, and came up.

Daisy Summerfield's Art

Lara, Paula, and Paula's doorman put Lara's things in the trunk.

"Good luck, sweethearts," Paula said.

"Have a good semester. Drive carefully!"

"We'll miss her," the doorman said.

•

Stephanie's eye gleamed. "What's Daisy Summerfield like?"

They exited the park, passed Daisy's building on West 86th Street without knowing it, turned right on West End Ave, made a left on 96th, then another right, and they were northbound on the Henry Hudson Parkway.

1998

“The best art is anonymous,” Daisy said at the entrance to the gallery.

She was having a boss day.

“Buddhas, Gothic cathedrals, novels by A Lady, Native American baskets . . .

“No one should sign a work of art, because art is a spiritual expression.”

This was one of her major themes.

“Stonehenge. Easter Island. People leave surprises for each other.”

Alan was relaxed and happy. He and Daphne had just come back from France.

He held the door for Daisy, and as she glanced at the catalogs in the showcase she had an idea.

She started to tell Alan she would do a series of landscapes, but he was looking up the stairs.

333

Daisy Summerfield's Art

Before they went to lunch Alan showed her one of her old sculptures.

At first she didn't recognize it.

"Where did it come from?" she asked.

"Paris! The person who bought it returned it. Daphne wanted to buy it.

"It's an odd piece," he apologized. "Not one of your signature pieces."

•

Daphne had been at the gallery to greet Daisy.

They kissed, and Daisy looked for new clothes or jewelry from Paris.

But Daphne was wearing her gray sweater and skirt.

"I missed you," she cried. Alan excused himself and went to his office.

Daisy, who had a splinter of ice in her heart, barely noticed her best friend's absence.

The Stone from Paris

When Alan returned, Daisy heard Daphne wasn't coming with them.

She was going to her office at Chubb Institute to pick up her mail and messages.

•

Daphne walked around the sculpture.

It's joyful, she thought.

She was thrilled to own it. She loved Daisy and rejoiced in her talent.

•

The Kodaly Gallery porter came to work through the back entrance.

Today he brought his fiancée, Francine, and her little son, Raymond, to see Brian Brighton's paintings.

They were going to eat at the Met.

Driving into Manhattan, Frankie said Daisy Summerfield had told him they could get vegetarian food there.

Daisy Summerfield's Art

Brighton's paintings were small and were bolted to the walls so no one could steal them.

At first they might think he was a child Raymond's age.

But the *New York Times* printed long reviews of his work, and Candace had made copies of them.

They were on her desk. They could take one of each, and Raymond could take them to school.

•

Daphne was in a cab and Candace was in the bathroom when Frankie entered from the street.

He saw a discordant note.

"Go outside," he told Francine. "Wait for me there. I'll show you this gallery another time."

Wearing his winter gloves, he hefted the sculpture and carried it to the mop room, where he set it behind the door and covered it with a clean rag.

He didn't blame Alan or the curators for the outrage.

The Stone from Paris

Whenever he removed unsolicited work, he thought, Alan doesn't need an assist.

Some artists couldn't believe their work wouldn't interest the gallery.

Believe it, he thought.

This was the first time a sculptor had the effrontery to use one of their pedestals!

He put it away and went back to Francine and Raymond waiting outside.

He hurried them west on 79th to see the big Christmas tree at the Met.

He apologized to God for working on the Sabbath and thanked Him for the chance to help Alan.

•

Four people had just entered the gallery. One of the couples owned a Brighton.

Alan was eager to greet them.

Daisy Summerfield's Art

It was two o'clock and Daisy was on the same side of town as the flea market.

Two more people arrived.

Alan and Daisy separated to let them up the stairs.

They kissed and she ran down the walk, looked left, saw an empty cab, and hailed it.

The driver made a left on to Fifth Avenue, and in minutes she was at 26th Street and Sixth Avenue.

•

As he bounded up the stairs, Alan was sorry his clients couldn't meet her.

But she would have had to comment on their name.

He passed his tongue over his teeth. "Hello," he called. "Mrs. Miaw, Mr. Miaw.

"Let me put away my coat, and it will be my pleasure to look at the paintings with you."

The Stone from Paris

He hurried down the hall, flung his coat on a hook behind his door, went to his private bathroom, washed his hands, brushed his teeth, and combed his hair.

Two years ago the Miaws had bought the smallest, least abstract, most charming Brighton canvas.

It was the least expensive, a mere \$40,000.

His paintings appealed to the child adults no longer cared to keep hidden.

Like the town of that name, his paintings were alive with resort colors.

Alan had grown up with great art but it was starting to seem strange to him.

If you liked a painting, why not buy a nice clean print of it?

“Well,” he said to the Miaws and the Batemans, “should we go around this way?”

“Such beautiful color,” Mrs. Bateman said, knowing Myra would kill her if she mentioned her decor.

Daisy Summerfield's Art

The Miaws loved *Cracking Walnuts with Walt* and asked to see a price list.

Alan warned them they would never see another Brighton at the price they had paid for theirs, and visitors watched him make \$200,000 to split with the artist.

Mrs. Bateman went back to *A Small White Cape Amidst White Capped Waves*.

Alan raised his eyebrows.

She shook her head, though her house was a white Cape, and her chintzes were turquoise, white, and beige.

"If we could afford it," she said, when her husband went downstairs to use the restroom, "I would get a Summerfield."

"Really!"

"I would love to have one of her stone sculptures to look at every day."

"None of her work is available now," he said. "Sometimes one comes up at auction."

He was going to show her the sculpture from Paris.

The Stone from Paris

“Then I bet a museum buys it,” Mrs. Bateman said.

He felt flattered.

He went behind Candace’s desk and selected a few of Daisy’s catalogs.

“With my compliments,” he said.

After the Miaws and Batemans left, he caught up on work in his office.

•

It was late in the day when a bad feeling about Daisy’s sculpture came over him.

He went out to the reception area.

The sculpture was gone.

He had promised to tell Daphne that Daisy wanted to live with it for awhile.

Maybe she would do a series.

Sometimes an artist does something ahead of the curve and it takes time to catch up.

Daisy Summerfield's Art

The sculpture hadn't meant much to the person who bought it from Jacques Bussy.

Jacques' son Marc was ver-ry 'appy to have Alan take it off his hands.

He looked in the offices, saw the crate in the storage room, and called Charles O'Hara.

No, Daphne hadn't called him. He couldn't have done it today, anyway.

One of his trucks was in the shop.

Alan closed the gallery and walked up Madison, worried about the sculpture.

Imagine worrying while twisting and turning in the narrow streets on the Left Bank!

Here they were straight and wide. He stopped and looked in some windows.

Then he went over to Park and walked up the stately avenue to his building.

The Stone from Paris

He checked all the rooms and slowly came downstairs exhausted and unhappy.

•

“Did you go to the flea market yesterday?”

“Yes!” said Daisy.

“I got something neat, and I got another neat thing today,” she went on.

“You know Satsuma, don’t you?”

“My grandparents had an umbrella stand that looked like it had a thousand cigar rings pasted on it.

“Today I got a vase I love.

“There’s only a tiny bit of gold, so I know it wasn’t made for export.

“Sixty dollars.”

She chuckled.

“It has painted figures on it, but the dealer didn’t know it was Satsuma.”

“Daisy, I have something to tell you.”

Daisy Summerfield's Art

“What?”

“It's bad.”

A museum was de-accessioning her sculpture. Her reputation was in an eclipse.

But did she really care, when she had two new pieces of china worthy of a paper about the twin islands, England and Japan?

She had washed the Palmer Cox Brownie and the vase, and studied them through her loupe.

The brownie, wearing a yellow suit, was seated with his arms behind him

If she held him to the vase backward, his hands fit the curve of its shoulder, and he was the same size and shade of yellow as its two dog handles.

Alan was describing his afternoon leading up to the bad thing that happened.

“That's nice,” she said of Mrs. Bateman.

“Stolen!”

“I was hoping you'd say you took it.”

The Stone from Paris

“It must be in one of the offices.”

“I looked.”

“You didn’t see it.”

“I’ll look again.”

“You’ll find it.”

She tried not to mind his low opinion of her and that he hadn’t noticed her sculpture was missing even when a woman was telling him she loved her work.

“I guess I have to report it,” he said.

“Who would you report it to?”

“The insurance company and the police.”

They won’t find it!”

Maybe she took it and disposed of it, he thought. It might not seem like theft to her.

“I don’t want it to be in the papers. It would make me feel humiliated.”

“Why?”

“Don’t you feel gleeful when someone is robbed?”

Daisy Summerfield's Art

“No!”

“Maybe it’s a class thing.”

“What do you mean?”

That he was rich and she was poor?

“If it’s in the paper, someone will copy it. I was planning to make a series.”

So he’d guessed right.

“I’ll call Taig,” he said. “Do you have the number for the DA’s office?”

“He’ll do everything by the book.”

Alan was losing his patience. “If I don’t report it, my insurance is worthless.”

“It’s my piece.”

“It’s my gallery.”

Daphne had been waiting downstairs.

She went up.

“Let’s both think about it,” he said, seeing her frown. “And Daisy, I’m truly sorry.”

The Stone from Paris

“I’m sure it’s there.”

“Why were you discussing it?” Daphne asked as he put down the phone.

“It’s her sculpture.”

“It’s your gallery.”

“It’s hers, too.”

She looked incredulous.

“I wouldn’t have a gallery without artists.”

“It’s my sculpture, and it’s my gallery, too, for all the years I’ve worked there!”

She was so angry she burst into tears. Alan was her life, and that crackpot Daisy was her life.

•

Stolen, thought Daisy.

She pictured a mafia boss throwing down his stogie. “Get dat out ’a here!”

It makes him feel ashamed of his life of crime.

Daisy Summerfield's Art

He has an idea. "Tie dat to Hoimie when youse drown 'im—after youse shoot 'im.

"Hey! Go get me some scungilli."

Having lightened the mood and placed her sculpture at Sheepshead Bay, she crawled to the back of her closet and started rolling a stone on to a T-shirt.

She had two of these stones.

One at a time, she dragged them out.

Like the sculpture from Paris, they were larger than the stones she usually carved.

Now she had to get them on her stands.

She sat down on the floor and pulled one into her arms but couldn't get up.

She tried using her bed as leverage.

•

There had never been a theft at the gallery, and Alan was jetlagged and not thinking clearly.

Daphne was jetlagged and upset.

The Stone from Paris

Daisy was fine, but Alan didn't listen to her.

She had carved over a hundred sculptures, and he thought she lacked common sense.

•

“Modesto, can you help me? I have to put a heavy stone on a table.”

He shut off the elevator and came in.

“Don't hurt yourself,” she cried, wringing her hands.

He put it on a stand and asked, “Do you want the other one on this table?”

“Can you do it?”

He put his finger to his lips.

And all these years she thought no one knew she had been carving in her apartment.

She saw him to the door and celebrated, drinking cold coffee at her desk.

•

“Sounds like you had a rough day,” Taig said over the phone.

“Not really.”

Daisy Summerfield's Art

"You're taking it well."

"I'm sick."

"What's the matter?"

"It must have been something I ate, so please don't tell Alan if you talk to him."

"Can I get you anything?"

"No, I'm going to sleep."

"You're right, he doesn't have to report it. It would be better for him not to."

"But if it's found, his insurance company will erase the report and he'll still have a clean record."

"Any idea who stole it?"

"I would if it were any other gallery."

•

Daisy had taken out oils, turpentine, and a glass shelf from her medicine chest.

The Stone from Paris

She squeezed out Lemon yellow and Prussian blue, selected a brush from her collection, dipped it in turpentine, then in blue, and painted the stone.

She worked a little bristle brush into the yellow, and painted *Tu Fu* near the top.

She started leading her chisel sideways, making the stone slightly convex, making *Tu Fu* an inaccessible peak, and many thoughts went through her mind.

“You can’t work like that! You should use power tools,” her father said.

Her mother hated the way Daisy thought, but after Mr. Summerfield died she saw him in the living room.

“Morris?” she quavered.

•

Alan faxed Taig the address and phone number of Gallerie Jacques Bussy.

Daisy Summerfield's Art

He faxed him Marc Bussy's home address and phone number, and the address and phone number of the sculpture's previous owner, Lord Spanner.

He faxed him Brian Brighton's addresses and phone numbers in England and L.A.

An hour later, he faxed him several pages of the gallery's Visitors Book.

What am I supposed to do with this, thought Taig.

•

"How are you feeling?"

"Awful."

"Anything I can do?"

"No, thank you."

He hoped she hadn't had plastic surgery. He pictured her little face bruised and bandaged.

He should have told her: she looked cute old.

•

The Stone from Paris

Daisy mixed Cadmium red light with Magenta and painted the second stone.

She painted *Li Po* near the top in black.

She had nowhere to put her carving tools and brushes or her too-narrow palette.

She sorted through her colors, making piles inside the box she kept them in.

As she carved, mixed, and painted, carved, mixed, and painted, she built up patinas.

She emptied her china cabinet, setting stacks on the floors of her closets. Then she walked the 6' x 16" x 32" pine cabinet to her front hall and squeezed past it.

Modesto said he could take it that night.

She was in love with her new work. "It's unbelievable," she kept saying.

•

"What did she say?" asked Alan.

Daisy Summerfield's Art

“She said when you give money to a beggar you should give enough so he can also give, because giving is a mitzvah.

“God made a mitzvah by giving people the gift of creation.”

Daphne put up her hair.

Alan said, “Maybe she’ll find it at the flea market.”

“I wouldn’t tell her that!”

Silver-gilt morning light came through their bedroom window on Park Avenue.

After Alan left the mirror, Daphne saw a skein of hair standing away from her head.

She removed her combs, brushed her hair back and up, gathered it, twisted it, and held it as she took one comb and fastened it, then the other.

As Alan filled his pockets, the accustomed weights and forms made him feel like a samurai.

“Anything else?” he asked.

Daphne, head held proudly, diamonds twinkling at her ears, said, “She was surprised the paint stayed on the sculpture.”

The Stone from Paris

“I expect her to know what she’s doing,” he said in annoyance.

Following him downstairs, she asked, “Was it signed?”

She hadn’t seen a vertically connected *DS* that looked like a stick figure of a sea horse or a pennant flying from a bent pole inscribed near the bottom.

“We didn’t get a ransom note, did we?”

He jingled the coins New Yorkers were too hurried to let him spend.

Daphne ran back up for her briefcase, came down, put on her coat, and arranged her new silk scarf.

Alan jabbed the elevator button.

The cables hummed and the ancient elevator operator said, “You have a heavy package downstairs. It’s from a library in Paris”

Daphne put a hand to her heart.

“I forgot we bought books! I thought someone had smashed the sculpture.”

“You sound like Daisy.”

Daisy Summerfield's Art

The doorman opened the street door and a blast of cold air hit them.

They pulled up their collars, lowered their heads, and walked over to the Camilla.

"I wish she'd marry Taig," Daphne said.

"What about her work?"

"What work?"

"She said she was going to do a series based on the sculpture."

"That's why it vanished.

"I think I'll have a cheese Danish. I haven't had one since I came to New York to see you every weekend."

"You said you were coming to work on your thesis."

"Do you remember the White Horse Tavern, Café Wha?, and the Fat Black Pussycat?"

"I thought, here's this cool college chick. I have to impress her."

"Sitting with Franz Kline at the Cedar bar was very impressive."

"Good," Alan said.

The Stone from Paris

“Do you remember eating at Rikers and the Chuck Wagon at four in the morning?”

“I do.”

“Remembrance has a rear and front—/’Tis something like a house.”

She quoted Emily Dickinson while pointing at her plate.

“Are you enjoying it?”

“Very much.”

They ate the pastries using knives and forks.

Daisy would have cut hers into strips and picked them up with her fingers.

“How is it, good?” asked their new self-appointed favorite waiter.

“Very good,” Daphne said.

They arrived at the gallery, and Alan asked Melanie and Vincent to come to his office.

He told them about the robbery, then closed his door and called his lawyer.

Daisy Summerfield's Art

"I want to make my wife a director and vice president," he said.

"It's long overdue."

"You don't have to. She's your heir."

"That's not why I'm doing it."

He called him back and said, "Make her a full partner."

Mary Ann at his insurance company told him to send her copy of the bill and she'd take care of it.

He forgot to ask if he should report it to the police. Common sense said, make the call.

The officer who answered the phone wanted to know where the gallery was located.

After almost a hundred years in his building, Alan would have thought they'd know.

"Any sign of a break-in?"

"I told you it happened around lunchtime when the gallery was open."

"So anyone could have walked off with it."

The Stone from Paris

“It’s a two-foot high piece of sandstone. It weighs well over a hundred pounds!”

“Any identifying marks?”

“Do you have an art expert I can speak to?”

“You’re reporting a robbery.”

“It’s an art robbery.”

“Any identifying marks?”

“It’s two feet tall and wedge shape.”

“Wedge shape?”

“If you stand a slice of pie on its crust, that’s the shape.”

“A pie stands on the crust. That’s what the crust is for.”

“I mean the back that’s crimped.

“Actually, the tip is crimped and the back is flat. I mean the back that’s really the bottom.

“In other words, it’s an isosceles triangle that rests on its base. One side is blue and says *God* in white letters. The other has multiple cuts representing trees and is dark red.

Daisy Summerfield's Art

“It’s a gorgeous piece. I’ll go into more detail when you send someone over.”

“Over where? You know where it is?”

“Thank you for your help.”

He walked into the gallery and heard Candace on the phone gossiping about the robbery.

•

Frankie Williams told Francine that a sculpture of Daisy’s was stolen.

“NO!” she bellowed.

They loved Daisy.

He said it had a label from a Paris gallery, and that would help identify it.

“What about the one you put in the mop room?”

“Daisy wouldn’t do that.”

“It’s not a blaspheme!”

The Stone from Paris

But he thought the devil made it, because even when he held Francine's substantial body after Raymond had gone to bed, his arms felt empty.

•

“We got you something in Paris!”

Daisy had asked for a few packs of Gauloise Disque Bleu.

She saw herself carving, squinting against the smoke of a short French cigarette.

“When do you want to come over?”

She always came running when Daphne called.

“I could come there,” Daphne said.

Daisy heard her door being unlocked.

“I have to go!

“Wait out there!” she yelled.

Daphne's American students were being replaced by rich foreigners, and she was quitting.

She was going to work full time with Alan.

Daisy Summerfield's Art

She had put a typical student evaluation in the copier: "Dr. Kodaly is a radiant presence . . ."

She wanted to read it to Daisy.

She heard her return to the phone, but before she could speak it was turned off.

•

Taig had finished testifying before a grand jury and come uptown to see Daisy.

"You surely know that these excursions are frowned upon[, he thought]. I find it very curious that I should be required to wait outside the sacred paling. I want to tell you everything, all my sorrows and worries."
[*The Tale of Genji*, tr. Seidensticker]

She covered her sculptures and opened the door looking the same as usual.

"Try not to walk on the chips."

Chips?

Whoa. He stepped on one.

"Now you have paint on your shoe. Don't walk on it."

The Stone from Paris

“What’s going on?” he asked.

“I’m working.”

•

“Elsie, hi, this is Daisy Summerfield.”

“Hi,” Elsie said, unimpressed.

“Do you have a piece of sandstone you can send me?”

“We can’t choose a stone for you!”

“If it’s sandstone and about two feet tall, I’ll take it.”

“Let me ask Bruce.”

“No,” he said.

“Tell him I’ll buy a sculpture stand, too,” she pleaded, tying her boots.

•

She paid for a stone and a stone-carvers stand, and went out to find a taxi.

A driver stopped but refused to wait. He would have left anyway when he saw her purchases.

Daisy Summerfield's Art

“You couldn't have chosen a worse time,” Bruce said, laughing.
“You'll have to leave them.”

“I just started carving again!”

She had been buying supplies from him for forty years and had always liked him.

He closed the shop and put her things in his truck.

As they rode up Tenth Avenue, she learned he was married and had grandchildren.

“I don't believe it!” she said.

“Did you think I was gay?”

He parked in front of the hydrant and took the things to her vestibule.

She unlocked the lobby door and was pushing down the stop as he drove away.

First she set the stand near the elevator.

Then she rolled the stone on to the doormat and dragged it into the lobby.

The Stone from Paris

She had to go down to the basement, find the porter, and ask him to bring up a hand truck.

He wheeled the stone into her apartment and placed it on the stand.

She cleaned it, painted it pink, and printed *Wang Wei* near the top in black.

•

Daisy rolled her desk chair to the service area across the hall.

It was gone by the time she took apart her Workbench desk and put it out there.

She called Con Ed, saying she smelled gas.

They came and disconnected her stove.

The super agreed to remove the stove, her refrigerator, and a wooden cabinet.

She ordered two more metal chairs from a catalog.

Linda Leone would know where to buy a counter height refrigerator.

“I’m sorry about your sculpture,” Linda said.

Daisy Summerfield's Art

“They’ll find it.”

“Sure. Even the Kodaly can get a little farmished.”

“I started carving again.”

“I knew you would!”

•

That night, the counter-height refrigerator was delivered from the Lower East Side.

Taig moved Daisy’s illegal washer and dryer to the kitchen and reattached the hoses while she filled and plastered the tunnel she had made in the wall.

She now had a little utility room where she could eat, pay bills, and do laundry.

•

After buying a large wooden taboret and ordering a glass top for it, to use as a palette, Daisy started walking uptown.

She had almost bought paint in cans. She would have had painted stones instead of T’ang poets as mountains!

The Stone from Paris

As she avoided the worst slush, she remembered having gone to New York Central in a snow storm.

They had given her a cup of tea, and she told Linda, who screamed, “Do you know how special that is?”

She really had a wonderful life. She had lived in Manhattan over thirty years.

Imagine how well she knew it.

She didn't!

Apart from landmarks such as the Morgan Library she just passed, the city is always changing.

After twenty blocks she stopped and looked downtown.

No buses were coming so she walked on, carrying some heavy paint tubes in her bag.

She reached 60th Street and went on.

At last she greeted Daphne's doorman, rode up, took off her coat, and followed Daphne into the kitchen.

“Coffee?” Daphne asked.

Daisy Summerfield's Art

She took two mugs from the cupboard and set them on the counter.

Daisy pulled out a chair and sat down, more comfortable there than in her own apartment.

The Kodalys had a daily cleaning man, and all their rooms were lived in.

Daisy's were a slowly evolving still life.

"Or would you like tea?"

Was that a hint?

"No! Coffee!"

"What's happening with your kitchen? Are you sure you don't need a stove?"

"I don't cook."

"That's true." Daphne opened a white bakery box and displayed six bread twists.

Daisy spied an olive and saliva rushed into her mouth. "Are they all olive?"

"I know you love them."

The Stone from Paris

She chose one and took a bite.

She couldn't say she was working, because Daphne would tell Alan and he would want to see them.

"I want to tell you about the woman whose office is next to mine," Daphne said.

"What's her name?"

"Jody."

"Is she blonde?"

"Sort of."

"Is she pretty?"

"She's all right."

"What does she teach?"

"Political Science."

"What's her last name?"

"Brown."

"I don't believe it!" Daisy bit into an olive. "Is that her maiden name or her married name?"

"I don't know."

Daisy Summerfield's Art

Daisy's nose went into her mug.

Daphne caught on. "It's Jo-dee.

"I thought this would interest you as a detective. Her husband had beautiful sweaters.

"Jody asked, Where is the yellow, the maroon, the navy, the gray, and the beige?"

"What did he say?"

"He said he takes them off on the train, puts them on the overhead rack, and forgets them.

"They commute from Connecticut, but not together.

"She thinks he's having an affair and giving the sweaters to his girlfriend."

"I do too."

"That's so sad, because she bought them for him. She chose them lovingly."

This is awful, thought Daisy as Daphne left the room.

She returned with four cigarette packs. Daisy started opening one.

The Stone from Paris

“Don’t go out and smoke yet!” Daphne gave her a yellow ochre dragon.

“He’s beautiful!”

She counted his claws.

He had five.

“Do you know what it is?”

“An Imperial Chinese dragon.”

“The dealer said she got it at a shop near NYU. It was labeled Bennington Lion.”

“Are you really quitting teaching?” Daisy asked, opening the cigarettes.

“Yes. Guess who’s a director of the gallery.”

“Melanie?”

“No, I am.”

“I know you are.”

“Did Alan tell you he was making me a director and vice-president?”

“You mean you weren’t?”

Daisy Summerfield's Art

•

“Want me to try to find it?”

“Will you?”

Daisy knew better than to work while Taig was at the gallery, so she cleaned her taboret top with a razor.

Then she took her brushes to the kitchen and washed them with soap and water.

•

Melanie told Taig how the gallery worked and described everyone on staff.

“Frankie Williams is very religious.”

“What did he think of the sculpture?”

“He wasn't here when it went to Paris, and he doesn't work on Saturdays.

“No one would show him the slides.”

Two 6 x 6 cm color transparencies of the sculpture lay on white paper on her desk.

“What do you think happened?” Taig asked.

The Stone from Paris

“Daisy *has* caught criminals.”

“Think one of them did it?”

“I don’t know.”

“No,” he said. “I checked.”

He wanted to spend more time with her, so he asked her to show him around.

•

Daisy enjoyed a repast of tea, saltines, jam, and olives while reading *Biography of Po Chü-i*, Annotated translation from *chüan* 166 of the *Chiu T’ang-shu*, by Eugene Feifel.

“Once before I told you that when people write they unconsciously assert themselves too much; they do not like being cut down to fewer lines. They make the mistake of writing too prolixly. Still more are they unable to decide what is beautiful in their writings and what not. They must, therefore, find a friend who is an impartial critic and who knows no leniency. He should argue with the writer and cut

Daisy Summerfield's Art

out (whatever is superfluous). Only then will the verbosity and terseness of his writings become well balanced. You and I too grieve over the wordiness of our writings. If we suffer from this evil, others do so still more. Now that each of us has collected his poems and prose writings and has roughly arranged them in chapters (*chüan*), I am looking forward to the day when I shall see you.”

•

“There’s more to it than spit cleaning and relining,” Melanie said. “When Dr. Rosenthal died, Alan didn’t hire another conservator. We’ve all had training.”

“Spit cleaning?” Taig asked as they entered the fourth office.

Dr. Rosenthal had cleaned priceless paintings with his own saliva and a Q-tip.

“I know it seems odd,” she said, “since porters have always worn gloves.”

The Stone from Paris

They got to the storage room. Taig took the name and number of their contact at Santini Brothers and examined the packing and shipping areas.

Next they entered the mop room and found it.

•

On the way up Broadway to Mana, Daisy's favorite restaurant, where each macrobiotic dish was freshly prepared, Taig tried to talk about art.

Her attitude was that it was as close as humans could come to God.

While they waited for a table, she said she would like to design her own pedestals.

"Why don't you?"

"I'm not a designer," she snapped. "Are you sure Frankie doesn't know it's my sculpture?"

The diners chewed slowly, deliberating what to pick up next with their chopsticks.

Daisy Summerfield's Art

Taig and Daisy went to sit on a bench in the narrow space between the doors.

When the outer door opened a freezing wind blew in.

The hostess asked if they would mind sharing a table.

"I would mind," Daisy said, and the hostess left.

"The people who eat here aren't vegetarian. They don't care about the animals, they care about themselves," Daisy said.

Taig sometimes ordered fish but decided not to risk it.

If you knew his mother, you would see why he liked Daisy, though she lacked Harrietta's joie de vivre.

"How can people think they know God?"

"It's a concept!

"They make Him in their own image and then don't live by their rules!

"Ah have lied, Ah have cheated, Ah have fornicated and committed adultery!"

She took things hard. Harrietta led a life serene and untroubled.

The Stone from Paris

Could money protect Daisy from the way someone repaired a piece of china?

What fun! Harrietta would say on seeing its distorted shape.

Daisy and Taig were seated, and Daisy's favorite waitress was their server.

Daisy wanted Taig to see how she knew her wooden Buddha was Tibetan.

"The fellow who hid your sculpture meant well," he said.

"I think so too. Do you see how she looks like my wooden Buddha?"

•

"Going to the flea market?" asked Taig.

She would get off the train at 28th, and he would continue to Park Place.

Today she was going to the Sculpture Shop. "Come with me," she said.

•

Daisy Summerfield's Art

She introduced him to Bruce and Tom, and Tom cleared a path to the sandstone.

She said, "I'll take all four."

She made her way back to Bruce. "I need another stand. Mine wobble."

"That's not good!"

"Do you remember the stands I bought in 1960?"

"I told you they were for display. I bought them to help an old sculptor who needed money."

He laughed. "I bet that's why you stopped carving."

1999

Invitations went out for the opening of Three Contemporary Sculptors at the Close of the Century.

Daisy received hers, the Kodaly's received theirs, and Daphne called Daisy to congratulate her and to say, "The bluebird tombs will look terrific."

"Why don't they use one of theirs?" Daisy asked.

Her show at the Kodaly had just opened, and the museum was taking a big bite.

"I was a Bluebird," she said. "I flew up to Camp Fire Girl. I think I went higher.

"Horizon Girl?"

How people love to talk, thought Daphne. "I remember when you bought the bluebirds."

"I bought them from Mr. Flea. I have to give him an invitation."

"You told me he didn't have teeth!"

379

Daisy Summerfield's Art

"If you won't get me one, will you tell me who to call? I don't want to call the curator."

•

"What's this?" asked Taig.

"I saw it in a trash basket on Ninety-first Street. It had glue in it. I spent the day cleaning it," Daisy said.

She took the cup out and put it in a trash basket on Broadway, saying, "I thought I would use it for turpentine."

"You don't want to?"

"It makes me think of *The Golden Bowl*."

"Bad luck?"

She smiled happily.

•

"Hi, Daphne."

"Quick question. Melanie wants to know if you have a special cleaner for the *Tombs*."

"Uh, no."

The Evening Skirt

“We’ll use the one we always use on Plexiglas. What are you wearing to the opening?”

“Jeans, a shirt, and the pearl necklace you and Alan gave me.”

Like Mrs. Bradham in Henry James’ *The Ivory Tower*, she had “swallow[ed] it without winking.”

“We want to buy you a gown.”

“Let’s go to Comme des Garçons.”

“We’ll go to Bloomingdale’s and get something that has presence, so you don’t have to work.”

Surprised by Daphne’s insight, she agreed to meet her at 11:00 on Saturday.

“Meet me on the ground floor, Lexington Avenue side, in front of the stairs. If you want to look at socks or hair clips, go early.”

•

Escalator up!

“I always lose my identity here. I can’t find myself in the mirror,”

Daisy said.

Daisy Summerfield's Art

Immediately, among the Steinbergian busts of women, she saw her own pale face.

“I don't know how you could mistake yourself,” Daphne turned and said.

“I used to like St. Laurent.”

They arrived on the designer floor.

You wore nothing but Yves St. Laurent Rive Gauche for years, Daphne thought.

The department was ahead of them—and there was the skirt.

“We're getting you a gown,” Daphne said.

“What would you wear on top?” she asked on the way to the dressing room.

The saleswoman said she'd bring some tops.

Daisy planned to wear it with one of her plaid flannel shirts and work boots.

Modeling it, she was so pleased she said so.

The saleswoman cried, “Don't you dare!”

The Evening Skirt

Daphne wanted to shout, You don't know who you're talking to!
She sets the styles you slavishly follow!

If Oscar de la Renta had been there he might have snipped off
Daisy's collar and added a tulle fichu.

She barely glanced at the tops. She had an Agnès B. sweater at
home.

"You have to see them on," Daphne said.

The saleswoman wanted to call in a fitter.

Daisy didn't care for a fitter's opinion.

She supervised the packing.

"Clients aren't allowed back here. We prefer to deliver these
garments," the saleswoman said.

"What other contemporary art show does the museum have
planned for the millennium?" Daisy asked as they stepped on the Down
escalator.

"None I know of."

"Where is John Power from?"

"Australia."

Daisy Summerfield's Art

"Wait."

She stopped to look at costume jewelry.

"You can't take those on the bus. Take a cab," Daphne said.

•

Daisy showed Taig the invitation.

"You'll come, won't you?"

"Bad timing. We have some big cases."

"Your parents will be there."

"They'll be out of town."

He didn't know why she looked disappointed. She never accepted their invitations.

•

"Miss Summerfield!" said a stocky, dark-eyed man.

She looked at his hands holding a cuckoo clock.

"You don't remember me."

"Yes I do. We looked at that clock!"

"Have you solved more crimes?" he asked.

"How are you doing?"

The Evening Skirt

“I still never solved one.”

“That can’t be true!” She held up a brown bag and said, “This was a crime.”

“For real?”

A bowl she bought had been chipped by the dealer.

“Are you getting that clock?”

Mike looked down in surprise.

It was sixty-five dollars and he had one like it, but this one had an association with Daisy.

As he opened his wallet, the dealer said, “At’s thirty-five for New York’s Finest.”

“Buy you a cup of coffee,” she said.

“Sure!”

She started toward the exit. The Fritzie Coffee Shop was near her subway, but she wanted to go somewhere better.

They exited the parking lot on Sixth Avenue and walked up to 27th Street.

“This bowl I got—”

Daisy Summerfield's Art

"Let me carry it for you."

"Wait! I don't believe it! I put this cup in a trash basket at Eighty-ninth and Broadway!"

"I remember the nick in the gold. Oh, no. It has a crack!"

They came to another basket and she started to put it in, but the "hairline crack" was a hair.

"Ha, ha, ha," she laughed. Picasso had seen a hair on his soup and said it was a Matisse.

With Mike's help she put it in her bag.

She was exhausted. "I'd better eat," she said.

They entered a Japanese restaurant. She had plenty of cash and she had invited him.

As she chattered in a thin voice, calling him Mark, she noticed a brassy-haired man at the sushi bar.

He was somebody she feared. She racked her brain for the reason.

She set down her tea and put her hands to her face. It felt normal, and when she spoke her mouth didn't drag.

"I don't feel well," she said.

The Evening Skirt

They were at a table in a back corner.

On the pretext of using the washroom, Mike called Taig and paid the bill. He put Daisy in a cab.

•

She was surprised to see Taig waiting at the curb.

“You okay?” he asked.

She had napped coming home through the park.

•

Before Mike called him, Taig heard Lorimer was at a sushi bar on West 27th Street.

Daisy was there with a white male.

“He’s on the job,” the operative assigned to Daisy said.

“She’s coming home in a cab,” Taig said, calling him back.

As Mike and Daisy left the restaurant, the second operative lurched into Lorimer, spilling his sake.

•

Daisy lay on her bed as Taig stood over her.

He thought she would say she had seen Lorimer.

Daisy Summerfield's Art

"Where did you see Mike Angeli?" he asked.

"The flea market."

"Any special reason for talking to him?"

"He remembered me from when Daphne was in a coma. Isn't that nice?"

"I could ask him to the opening."

"Good idea. Want to call him?"

"No."

"Want to send him an invitation?"

"I can't get one for Mr. Flea!"

•

"I'm getting you some soba noodles," Taig said.

He went to the service hall diagonally across from her apartment and descended a flight of stairs.

Then he went to the service hall at the front of the building, where on their floor Daisy and the psychiatrist put out their garbage.

"She's alone," he said into his cell phone.

The Evening Skirt

“You didn’t drug her, did you?” he asked, as he and the operative passed on the stairs.

He made another call and his father answered. “We got the invitation!”

“You can’t go. Daisy’s in danger. I want you and Mom to go out of town.”

“We never go away in September! Does she know her show sold out?”

Harrietta had wanted a limestone *Mrs. Todd*.

He delayed one day, and it was sold.

He wanted to kill himself when she told him Sarah Orne Jewett’s *Mrs. Todd* was her idol.

Henry wasn’t fond of Daisy. He saw her as a charming star, cold and aloof.

If she had invited them to her studio, he could have bought the sculpture before the show opened.

Daisy Summerfield's Art

The Kodalys owned one *Mrs. Todd*. There was a slim chance he could buy the one someone had on reserve, but it wasn't Harrietta's first choice.

She could tell you that,

If *Mrs. Todd* had occasion to step into the far corner of her herb plot, she trod heavily upon thyme, and made its fragrant presence known with all the rest. Being a very large person, her full skirts brushed and bent almost every slender stalk that her feet missed.

Taig opened the door to the vestibule, closed it, opened the outer door, and started up Broadway.

"I have to go," he said.

"How is your wife?" asked the waitress who loved Daisy.

"Not so good. Can you give her something that will make her feel better?"

The Evening Skirt

He went outside and called Alan Kodaly. "I want you to get Daisy out of town."

"The opening's next week! We're taking her to dinner with Julia Delain of the Louvre!"

"Don't go to a restaurant unless you hire bodyguards. Lorimer's back."

"I saw him! He lost weight and bleached his hair!"

"I know."

"This show is important for Daisy."

"That's ridiculous. She's the only good one in it. Let me know what you decide," Taig said. "I've been paying private investigators for the past ten years."

•

Daisy jumped up.

The bag!

Had she left it at the restaurant?

It was on her kitchen table.

Daisy Summerfield's Art

The white and gold cup was the first thing she saw when she opened it.

She unwrapped the bowl and took it to her studio.

The variegated green glaze formed a dark pool inside it.

Six months ago, the dealer said it was American. She wanted fifty dollars for it.

Stupid people can be delightful—unless they remind you of someone from your childhood.

Today it cost thirty dollars.

Daisy said she'd take it.

The dealer said she was holding it for someone who went to the bank for the money.

Daisy paid, and the dealer shouted, "She bought the bowl you wanted!"

Daisy glimpsed a brassy-haired man in a trench coat as she fled down the aisle before Mike Angeli spoke to her.

He had been at the sushi bar.

He had followed her and Mike!

The Evening Skirt

•

“It’s not a police matter,” Taig told his mother, who called him back on his cell phone.

“No evidence.”

He was almost at Daisy’s building.

“Ma, I have to go.”

•

Two invitations to the opening at the Met were left on Daisy’s doormat.

“How do I get Mike Angelo’s address?” she asked Taig.

“Send it to the precinct. Want me to do it?”

He personally gave Mike the invitation and asked him to come. Daisy’s life was at risk.

•

The Chinese bowl had survived a thousand years until the stupid dealer got it.

Daisy Summerfield's Art

The correct way to repair the chips was with gold lacquer. Daisy scraped sculpting wax over them, and the honey color made them disappear.

•

“Joe?”

“Summerfall! I been thinking about you. I’m going to see you Sunday night.”

“Can we go together?”

“Maybe we can pick you up.”

“Who’s we?”

“Me and Liz, the curator. How do you think I got to be one of the sculptors?”

“Talent?”

“You could say that.

“I saw your show three times. The Kodaly’s must have told you it sold out.”

“Joe, who’s John Power?”

The Evening Skirt

“I don’t know, to be honest with you. Who knew when Taig became my patron, you’d be with his son?”

“Do you believe the people who live out there?”

“The ‘We have five residences’ bullshit? Why are they showing off for me?”

“Let me ask Liz if we can pick you up.”

“It’s out of your way.” He lived on the Lower East Side. “I’ll see you there.”

“Why isn’t *he* going with you?”

“He has to work.”

“The flea market’s closing.”

“They’ve been saying that for years.”

“Well, it’s happening.”

•

The officers who saw Taig take a bullet shot the gunman dead.

This was the first time Daisy didn’t have to worry about what to wear.

Daisy Summerfield's Art

Harrietta had asked Comme des Garçons to send her some clothes in black and navy.

As she stood in her black sweater and navy skirt to accept Taig's badge from Mayor Giuliani, her stony graven features looked like Gioletta Masina's.

"Navy is just a black you can see," Larry, the African-American salesman said.

He liked the way she wore the clothes and said he wished Rei could see her.

•

None of the little troupe of traveling actors in Daisy's head remotely resembled the Taigs.

"He left you a fortune," Harrietta said.

Daisy smiled to herself as the limousine moved smoothly over the highway.

To the rich, any amount of money was "a lot" or "a big chunk" or "a fortune."

The Evening Skirt

The driver stopped, got out, came around, and opened both back doors.

As she and Taig's parents walked to the open grave, Daisy saw Daphne and Alan.

She bowed her head and thought of Taig.

Harrietta thanked the minister then turned to Daisy, her hazel eyes shining brightly.

She was going to turn the death of her only son into something to wonderful for Daisy.

And Henry Senior, who needed his wife now more than ever, wouldn't stop her.

•

Daisy's studio was empty. She didn't remember doing the work now on exhibit.

Except for the one owned by Daphne and Alan, she would never see the sculptures again.

Daisy Summerfield's Art

She could carve *Mrs. Todd in a Boat*, *Mrs. Todd and Her Mother*, *Mrs. Todd* and “*The Queen's Twin*,” but had learned at an early age never to repeat past successes.

She read her reviews fifty, eighty, a hundred times, like “someone of the past” [*The Tale of Genji*, tr. Seidensticker].

•

At the age of 18, John Lorimer got three years of prison for breaking and entering.

He had learned to appreciate the decorative arts in those old mansions in Rochester.

After his release he earned his degrees and became an assistant curator at the Met.

His boss died, and he got the job.

He was unusual in that he liked all the departments and attended every social event.

Young artists gave him their work and became “his” artists.

The nastiness under his charm was like catnip to these artists.

The Evening Skirt

•

Daisy told Taig about the man who wanted her Chinese bowl.

“Hard to believe,” he said.

“By the way,” he asked, “do you remember what Lorimer looks like?”

“Why?”

“He’s back.”

He couldn’t believe she hadn’t recognized him in the almost empty restaurant.

“So watch out for him. Do you remember what he looks like?”

“I have his picture.”

She found a bristly stack of cards and started looking through them.

•

The invitation frightened Mr. Flea.

“Do you remember the plastic bluebirds I bought from you?”

“Gimme twenty-eight dollars.”

“What!” Daisy said.

Daisy Summerfield's Art

But he was giving a price for a vase, and when the man who was looking at it left, she bought it.

She stayed at the flea market chatting with everyone she knew, accepting compliments on her show at the Kodaly, complaining about her *Four Tombs* going to the Met, and carrying on about her old Cinderella watch.

It had come in a clear plastic slipper and inspired the tombs.

“Everyone here is looking for something,” Rich Bingham said, and they laughed.

The turquoise and black vase (“Rakka 11th to 12th cent.”) was described in *Pottery and Porcelain* this way:

They have the blazing of hot skies and ominous sunsets as well as the blue black cobalt of nights with stars too many and too large.

•

The Evening Skirt

A black Lincoln Town car glided down the Henry Hudson Parkway to the West Side Highway, exited at 96th Street, and arrived half an hour early.

The professional driver, in a black suit and tie, parked in front of the building.

The police officers who were holding the space for him waved and drove off.

•

Daisy's phone rang.

"Is your black sweater okay? I can send something over in a cab."

"It's fine," she told Daphne.

Her shower had gone well, and she was looking forward to getting dressed.

Her doorbell rang.

"I'm not ready," she called in a panic.

"You got flowers," the elevator man said as she swung up the door of her peephole.

Daisy Summerfield's Art

The Taigs had sent orchids that looked like little slippers when her show opened at the Kodaly.

“Wrong address,” she said.

Taig's operative, standing in the service hall two feet away, had his hand on his gun.

•

In the mirror near her front door she saw that her hair was drying well.

The operative heard her say, “Now for zee skirt.

He heard her drag the Bloomingdale's box from her closet and put it on her bed, and open it.

The skirt was too long, so she rolled up the waist. She hated alterations.

He heard a soft plaintive “Oh.”

When she took the sweater out of her drawer she found its smooth little buttons cracked.

“That's okay. You still look great,” he heard her say.

•

The Evening Skirt

“Ms. Soba, your car is here. Take your time.”

A crystal cylinder holding five fluffy white chrysanthemums was in the elevator.

Her driver said, “Let me take it for you.”

He might not be her driver. He might be a killer who knew her code name.

She unlocked her door and directed its placement on her metal bookshelf.

He took her key and locked the door.

“Did you hear something?” she asked.

Behind the service door, Taig’s operative trembled.

•

“You’re the most wonderful driver,” she said, halfway through the park.

He replied, “I wish I knew more about art. Your sculpture must be outstanding.”

“Same level as your driving. You know what they say, if you can draw you can drive.”

Daisy Summerfield's Art

"I hadn't heard that."

"At least you wouldn't have maniacs drawing on your sheet of paper.

"Why don't people learn to drive?"

"They think they're good," he said, taking a space in front of the museum as a police car left.

She started to open her door and he asked her to wait for him to open it.

They walked up the steps. His name was Chuck. He was a former narcotics agent.

They walked upstairs to the mezzanine.

Across the expanse of the Great Hall below them, where the Rodins were forty years ago, she saw the cone of one of Joe's giant funnels.

"That's mine," she said, pointing to a four dark stones pierced with light.

The plastic bluebirds were inside them.

The Evening Skirt

Walking past the glass cases of Asian ceramics to get to the exhibit, she said,

“Lulu, this is Chuck.”

“Look at you!” she cried, kissing Joe. “You look so handsome in your tuxedo.”

“You get the most fascinating men,” Lulu said.

“Chuck’s married.”

As Daisy looked for Mr. Flea she felt a hand on her arm.

“I’m sorry your new catalog isn’t what we talked about,” Melanie said.

The power to turn dreams into reality was what made Daisy an artist.

She didn’t have to wait and hope. If she wanted something, she could do it.

“I have enough material for a monograph,” Melanie continued, and Daisy hoped again.

•

Daisy Summerfield's Art

Daphne ducked behind the temporary wall of the exhibit to check the clasp on her pearls.

“Hello, Daphne,” Lorimer said.

“How was Australia?” she asked, trying not to smile at his brassy blond hair.

“I rue the day you suggested Summerfield draw my portrait.”

She sank to the floor.

He debated taking her pearls, decided not to, and returned to the party.

This was his home, his ancestral armor, statuary, furniture, china, silver, paintings, and fabrics.

He had loved walking down the stairs to the Great Hall, nodding at the guards.

He took a canapé. Excellent, he thought.

Summerfield cheated him out of his birthright. He left because of her.

There she was, talking to his protégé. It could happen any minute now.

The Evening Skirt

Where were the lights?

John Powers' electrical tubing described the shape of a house.

Daisy, looking at his materials, thought he could have done more with them.

Why not use lights, she asked him.

He had been sure she would remember him, and he was disappointed.

“It makes you think more, don't you think? Because with electricity you do think of light.”

“Chris! Hi! I'm Daisy Summerfield. Do you remember me?”

•

Lorimer felt the knife in his pocket, put his thumb on the button, and moved toward her.

It was the height of the evening. The well-heeled crowd was thick and noisy.

He would have liked her to die pleading with him, but he had learned he couldn't have everything.

Daisy Summerfield's Art

Taig's operative, who got the medics for Daphne, saw Lorimer's hand close on something.

Chris had aged since Daisy met him at the Kodaly. His hair was gray and he had a little pot belly.

"Do you teach literature?" she asked.

He said, "I write mysteries about an old comic character named Mopsy."

She cried, "You're Gladys Miller! I loved *Death Goes Dutch* and *Follow the Cuckoo*."

She felt someone behind her and stepped aside as Chris sank to his knees.

"Get up!" she said.

Taig's detectives grabbed Lorimer and held him.

The medics were just behind the exhibit, but Chris had been stabbed through the heart.

Daisy turned her anger on Taig. "You should have believed me ten years ago!"

"I don't need this," he said.

The Evening Skirt

•

“Are you sure you’re okay?”

“I’m fine. I was only out for a minute.”

“Does Alan blame me?”

“Of course not.”

“Chris Reilly was Gladys Miller! He wrote the *Mopsy* books!”

“He still shouldn’t have been killed,” Daphne said. “Are you going to Myron Kantrowitz’s opening?”

“Yes. I can wear my skirt again.”

“Then I’ll see you in it. Did you wear the earrings?”

Daisy went to her front hall, put her hand in her jacket pocket, and found the tiny box from Bloomingdale’s.

•

“Do you have a minute?”

Daphne looked up.

“I told Daisy I’d write about the crimes she solved, but I thought she’d carve more Witnesses,” Melanie said.

Daisy Summerfield's Art

"I asked her which poems she wanted me to use. She said she loved Su Tung Po and Po Chü-i.

"Do you know why Degas said art was like crime?"

"No. When did you speak to her about doing a catalog?"

"You were in the hospital."

Melanie found it hard to believe this elegant woman had been coshed twice.

"Are you sure you're okay?"

"Yes, but please sit down so I don't have to keep looking up at you."

"We know artists steal from each other."

"He might have meant cover-ups. Colors changed, things painted out, hands and feet hidden."

"Taking space and perspective from Japanese woodcuts, I thought."

"Or twisting a clay horse into a bathing woman."

"Turning your God sculpture into *Mrs. Todd*?" Melanie wondered how Daphne felt about that.

The Evening Skirt

She got up to look at a photo of a large stone that was displayed in the window.

The white painted band near the top now said LANDSCAPES, but in this photo it said DAPHNE + ALAN.

In a photo in the exhibit it said TAIG SOCKS.

Daisy said she could paint collectors' names on it and sign the photos.

She said it was a time-honored way to make a living.

"She just made a fortune," Daphne said. "Maybe I should sue her.

"But no. I think I understand her.

"She wants to use her gifts down to the nub and die with a pure soul and a light heart."

Standing in her grungy office, Melanie felt greater respect for Daphne than for any of their artists.

"May I ask Kohno Toshihiko to photograph her china for a monograph?"

"Go for it," Daphne said.

Daisy Summerfield's Art

•

Melanie's phone was blinking.

"I showed a gentleman the price list. He can see everything's sold!"

"I'll be right out," she told the receptionist.

A squat olive man with large yellow teeth was standing at the front desk.

"What's dis haff dot?"

"Hello," Melanie said. "This means it's on reserve. If you'll leave your name—"

"I ain't standin' in line to pay tree hunerd-fifty G."

"I understand."

"What's NFS?"

"It's not for sale. We borrowed it from a collector for the exhibit."

She went down the price list with him:

- 1. Red *Li Po*, oil paint on sandstone, 1999 (300,000)
- 2. Yellow *Li Po*, oil paint on sandstone, 1999 (300,000)

The Evening Skirt

- 3. White *Wang Wei*, oil paint on sandstone, 1999 (300,000)
- 4. Pink *Wang Wei*, ditto, 1999 (300,000)
- 5. Black *Tu Fu*, ditto, 1999 (300,000)
- 6. Blue *Tu Fu*, ditto, 1999 (300,000)
- 7. *Witness: Black River*, granite, 1978 (150,000)
- 8. *Witness: Royal Pavilion Hospital*, granite, 1984 & 1999
(175,000)
- 9. *Mrs. Todd*, oil sticks on limestone, 1999 (350,000)
- °10. *Mrs. Todd*, oil sticks on limestone, 1999 (350,000)
- 11. *Mrs. Todd*, oil paint on sandstone, 1979 & 1999 (NFS)
- 12. *Landscapes*, oil paint on sandstone, 1999 (NFS)
- 13-16. *Four Tombs*: “Blue,” “Bird,” “Of,” “Happiness,”
Recycled brownstone and Plexiglas, 1999 (1,000,000)

“May I show you something by another artist?”

“You don’t think my mother, a little Calabrese lady, can appreciate
dis?”

Daisy Summerfield's Art

He clamped his hand on No. 10, a delicately painted limestone boulder.

“Sir, please—”

Sometimes life is like fiction.

The fax machine beeped. “Sold! We’re delighted to buy *Mrs. Todd*.
The Getty.”

“I’m sorry. The museum that was considering it just purchased it.”

“I bet.”

“I have an idea. There’s a chance— Will you excuse me a minute?”

“Raymond! Are you on vacation?”

“Teachers conference.”

“Did you get catalog and copies of the reviews? Where’s your
uncle?”

“Frankie, go out front and make your presence known.”

“Daphne, if you want to sell your sculpture, I think I have a buyer.”

“Yes!” Daphne cried. “Give it to him for three hundred G. Daisy
will love that!”

The Evening Skirt

“What about the Taigs? The Getty bought the one on reserve.”

“They’ll live.”

“Do you want to check with Alan?”

“No! Get rid of it!”

•

Alan shut his door and called Taig.

“I owe you an apology,” he said.

“Forget it. How’s Daphne?”

“She’s fine. How’s Daisy?”

“We broke up.”

“I’ll call her,” Alan said.

“Don’t do it for me!”

•

“If you had been at the opening, you would have seen the murder,”

Daisy told Mr. Flea.

He ignored her, so she went to another booth and looked at a miniature pink plastic playpen.

Daisy Summerfield's Art

“Can you use that?” asked the dealer. Donald Duck was on it, so she bought it.

•

Leaving the market, she walked up to 28th Street.

While waiting for the light she looked in the trash and saw the white and gold cup.

She put it in her bag.

On her way out to dinner, she put it in another orange basket on Broadway.

Now that Lorimer was in prison, it wouldn't happen again.

•

Wearing work boots and a black-watch plaid flannel shirt with her black velvet skirt, she got out of a cab on Greene Street.

Lights blazed in a small brick building.

Old-fashioned black and gold letters on the window spelled “Kantrowitz & Son.”

The Evening Skirt

Myron greeted her at the door, and as she looked up at the shot she would see in the *Times* in a few hours, he told her his father had put up the money.

“It’s brilliant!” she cried.

“C’mere,” he said. “I want you to meet someone.”

He had been telling Jon Cohn how he got the idea for indoor steel sculpture.

He needed shelving, so he went to B & Z.

Daisy said, “I got the recycled. I gave the dimensions over the phone.

“The man I spoke to said it would cost thirty dollars. I was shocked it was so cheap!

“I went there, and he asked if he had given me a price. I thought it could be less, so I said no.”

“He said it would be forty.

“I said, you told me thirty!

“He said, you gambled and you lost.”

Daisy Summerfield's Art

“By the way,” Jon said, “I’m not just a fan. I own two of your pieces.”

She liked his girth and what she took to be kindness in his gray eyes.

His tux was as old and spotted as Myron’s was new and rented.

“What do you do?” she asked.

“I’m in a think tank.”

She clasped her hands. “Where?”

“Seattle.”

She had always wanted to live there.

•

Rudy Shayne wanted to know what Daisy thought of the sculptures.

She said she thought they synthesized the art of the twentieth century.

“Shit,” he said. “Did the Kodalys find you?”

He had seen them earlier.

She wondered if they had left.

The Evening Skirt

They are articulated paintings, she thought, pacing among the girders.

Myron had transposed Franz Kline back into steel.

Thanks to Myron, she thought, we can live with this art and hang our clothes and holiday lights on it.

•

Linda Leone squealed, “You look like a cute little woodsman ballerina!”

Daisy had rolled her waistband twice to make the proportion right with her work boots.

“I had a great idea,” Linda said.

“What?”

“I’m going to make lithos of Myron’s sculptures! Can I do your sculpture too?”

•

Daisy went over to Myron, her face pale and earnest. “I’m so proud to know you. God bless you,” she croaked.

Daisy Summerfield's Art

“You can be a clochard,” she told two small, fashionably dressed people.

“I should have known they were French,” she complained to Joe. “They have those little mouths.”

“Sh-h!”

He held her, compulsively kissing her hair.

Liz Six had become hysterical when John was arrested. “He made a mistake!” she screamed.

They had been the Yves St. Laurent and Loulou de la Falaise of the Met, according to her.

“He was supposed to kill Daisy,” she hissed, undressing at her apartment.

“He was doing it for me, so you would forget her!”

She tried to heave her slinky gown at him. “Get out!” she screamed.

•

“She got rid of it,” Melanie told Thor.

The Evening Skirt

“The china you were going to write about? What did she do with it?”

“She probably smashed it.”

•

John Power said he agreed to electrocute Daisy. “Lorimer told me that was how to get my work known.”

“And you went along with it.”

“No! I wanted to be in the show with her.”

“You’re not Australian, are you?”

“I’m from here.”

“Do you know Ms. Summerfield, or just her work?”

“She spoke to my class in high school.”

“She went through the metal detectors and talked to your class?”

“She said we could treat our work the way we wish we been treated.

“We wanted to walk her out to her car, but she didn’t have one.

“We bought her a present, but we never heard back.”

Daisy Summerfield's Art

"Maybe she didn't get it," Taig said.

•

Everyone tried to crash the opening. The police cordoned off the building.

"I'm so grateful to be part of the New York art world," Daisy told Daphne. "You haven't said anything about my skirt!"

"You look the same."

"That's good, isn't it?"

"Can we drop you off?" Alan asked Daisy.

"No, I smell food!"

"They're just setting up," Lulu King said.

The Kodalys kissed Daisy and left her telling Lulu, "I had a black velour skirt that came to my ankles. I wore it with work boots and a green nylon bomber jacket.

"Oh, I remember. It had a wide Lycra waistband—so wide you could wear it as a strapless dress.

The band got a big hole."

The Evening Skirt

•

Staying behind the tape, Joe went over to Taig and asked, “Did you get any of my messages?”

Taig nodded at Joe’s cigarette.

“That’s why she likes you.”

•

She was at the steam table trembling with delight. All the food was vegetarian.

She was telling of the time Little Lulu and Alvin bought a hot dog at the beach and dropped it in the sand.

“I’d give anything to find that.”

•

At 3 a.m. she left with Jon Cohn, giving him ideas for the think tank:

Books we own but never read speak to us.

A DNA controlled laser vacuum can pick up dictators anywhere in the world.

•

Daisy Summerfield's Art

There was a trash basket near the police barricade. There under the floodlights was the white and gold cup.

Taig quoted, “That cup there has turned witness.”

She laughed.

He went on, “I’ve wanted it to meet him, and I’ve wanted him to meet it, and to be myself present at the meeting.”

“It’s cracked.”

“A crack? Then your whole idea has a crack.”

She stood between the two men, and one can only guess comme cela se trouve.

2001

“Hi, Daisy, it’s Melanie. Do you have a minute?”

“Sure!”

Daisy loved talking on the phone.

Melanie was pressed for time.

She was a curator at the Kodaly Gallery on East 79th Street, in Manhattan.

Daisy expected to hear a request from a magazine or a museum.

“Do you remember Patti Lelong?”

The Kodaly had had so many receptionists, no one could remember them all.

“Yes!” said Daisy.

“She’d like your number. She manages the bookshop at the Harford Museum in Connecticut.”

“Wow.”

It was cutting edge—a museum without a permanent collection.

Daisy Summerfield's Art

"It's somewhere near you."

Daisy wondered if she would enjoy seeing Patti. Except for journeymen and people in shops and restaurants, she didn't know a soul in Westchester.

"Did she say what she wants?"

"Her friend Chip gave her a ring. Since then she's had all kinds of trouble."

"Get rid of the ring."

"You're joking."

Fun, thought Daisy, going outside.

"Is it old or new?"

"It's old."

"Someone doesn't want her to have it!"

"What!"

"I didn't see the treasures of Tutankhamen."

"Why?"

"I believe in his curse."

The Aquamarine Ring

“I’ll let you explain it to Patti, if it’s okay to give her your number.”

Daisy was listed in her new residence under a new name, Daisy Taig.

•

When Taig’s parents died in May, the death taxes were enormous.

His father, a textiles manufacturer and art collector, never cheated anyone, much less the government.

Taig and Daisy auctioned the art and jewelry, paid the IRS, and still had lots of money.

After Taig left for Cambridge on Monday mornings, Daisy recovered from the weekend.

On Friday evenings he returned from his alma mater.

He had retired from the NYPD and was working for a doctorate in American Literature at Harvard.

•

He sat down next to a paperback, *Blonde Like Me*.

“Going to dye your hair?” he asked.

Daisy Summerfield's Art

"I've been blonde all my life!"

"Really?"

Her heart sank. "How can you not know my hair color?"

"You don't have a hair color."

"It's faded."

"I'm sorry."

"I'm an ash blonde, a Moon blonde, the most dangerous kind.

"I'm the least dangerous of the most lethal type," she said, picking up the book.

"Moon blondes fire unquenchable longing," she read aloud. "They are interested in conquering but have no desire to colonize."

She stopped, embarrassed.

•

"I'll sweeten the deal," Taig had said. "I'll sell you the house for a dollar."

She accepted, and it was her land, her roof over them, as they sat on her furniture.

The Aquamarine Ring

It pained her to open her wallet in the law office and give him a dollar.

But back on the street before parting, he gave her a twenty.

•

The accident happened on Route 35 in Horsefly. Henry Senior, 86, had a massive stroke at a red light.

Harrietta, 81, pulled the emergency brake, turned on the emergency lights, and punched 911 on her cell phone.

She felt for his pulse, didn't find it, and opened her door and got out, hoping to flag down a doctor.

A young TV anchor, speeding while talking on his cell phone, killed her.

Daisy thought it was a miracle. She believed our death dates are engraved on our hearts.

The Taigs never contradicted each other. They left the earth together.

Neither had a health problem, and suddenly they were gone.

Daisy Summerfield's Art

Taig vowed to see the TV anchor imprisoned for life. He didn't care how many kids he had.

Daisy wanted him to engage the world of cable TV in safe, courteous, and skillful driving.

He would campaign nightly for the next seven years or face a criminal trial.

She wanted to add vegetarianism to his duties, but bowed to reason.

•

When Taig heard of his parents' deaths, he called Daisy.

From the West Side Highway to the Henry Hudson Parkway to the Saw Mill to I 17 he talked of securing the house.

They turned on to Route 35 and saw his father's car.

"You can't stop here," an officer said as Taig got out.

A few minutes later Taig got back in the car and handed Daisy his parents' keys.

•

The Aquamarine Ring

A large glass cube overhung by a cedar roof appeared at the top of a hill.

Ancient Oriental carpets strewn on the Buffalo grass were brick artwork.

Taig circled the house on the gravel driveway, stopped, and he and Daisy got out.

He opened a door concealed in the glass arcade surrounding the stone building, unlocked a sliding steel door, and they entered the living room.

Daisy stayed near the door as Taig checked the locks in the kitchen and two bedrooms.

He locked the glass door as he left.

Daisy walked through the arcade. On the south or kitchen side stood palm trees in huge ceramic pots.

The east side consisted of two bedrooms separated by enormous closets. The southeast was the master bedroom. The northeast bedroom was Taig's.

Daisy Summerfield's Art

The north side contained the seed within the core—the utility room.

She turned the corner and was back on the west side to watch the sunset.

Taig returned from seeing his blithe mother and bombastic father on slabs in the morgue.

He was talking on his cell phone. “Good,” she heard him say.

“No bequests.

“The fourth key’s in the vault.”

He closed the phone. “The key I gave you can’t be copied, but it can be stolen.”

She tried to give it back. That was when he begged her to marry him and offered her the house.

“You’ll like it when the art’s out of here,” he said, calling the storage facility.

“What time are they coming?” she asked.

“Ten a.m.”

The Aquamarine Ring

She wondered how they would get through the hours.

“Look,” she cried, “a Burchfield! I’ll call Alan to make sure we do everything right.”

“Good idea.”

She pressed 1,2,1,2, then the number as Taig left the room.

No one was at the gallery, so she called the Kodaly’s apartment.

“Where are you?” asked Daphne. “Did you forget we were having lunch?”

“I’m in Horsefly. Taig’s parents were killed in a crash.”

“WHAT?”

This was big news for the art world.

“I’ll be there in the morning with Vincent. Alan’s in California. Give Taig my love and sympathy.”

•

Taig told Daphne that Daisy had agreed to marry him.

“When?”

“I don’t know.”

Daisy Summerfield's Art

“Strike while the iron is hot!

“Let’s shoot for Sunday.”

“More violence,” he said, and they laughed.

•

Some of the gallery’s clients had homes in Horsefly, and Daphne knew her way around.

She rode into town with her driver to pick up lunch at the Blue Dragon.

While waiting for the order, she told the owner she was staying at the Taigs’.

She saw a glimmer of hope in his eyes.

“I meant their son and his fiancée.”

“How is he?”

“He’s getting married Sunday. That will help. Five or six people. May we have it here?”

He looked shocked.

“I know you aren’t open on Sunday, but only for two hours?”

The Aquamarine Ring

“I’ll pay anything.”

He smiled at that.

“Tell me any amount!”

He shook his head and asked what she wanted him to serve, handing her a menu.

Daisy loved polenta.

“Let’s have a big polenta!” That day it came with large grilled shrimp.

“I can give you with prosciutto.”

“The bride’s vegetarian.”

“So the polenta sliced and grilled?”

She nodded.

“With avocado.”

They added tomato salad, mixed greens, bread, olives, figs chilled and quartered, biscotti, and espresso.

Alan would buy the champagne, and she would order a cake at the Bakers Cafe.

Daisy Summerfield's Art

She handed her driver the food. He was parked going in the wrong direction.

Everyone loves Horsefly, she thought, looking in store windows as she walked up Main Street.

She came to a florist.

I would have forgotten flowers, she thought, going in to the Bakers Cafe.

A small woman with curly blond hair came out of the kitchen to speak to her.

They discussed non-dairy substitutes, but Cheryl said she had never used them, so Daphne ordered strawberry shortcake made with whipped cream.

Her driver was waiting outside the florist.

•

Yes, everyone loved Horsefly. The two-story Victorian buildings were obscured by huge vehicles.

The Aquamarine Ring

They stopped at a stop sign. Daphne noticed a thrift shop. Daisy will like that, she thought. “Wait!” she called. “I want to go to that bridal shop.”

Looking around as if she were Daisy, she found a pink nylon veil attached to a headband.

•

“It’s a headpiece,” she said, handing it to her in a sack. “You don’t have to wear it.”

But Daisy loved herself in it.

•

The Taigs had been cremated, and Daisy wanted to put their ashes in the stream on their property.

“Would they like that?” she asked Judge Nawi.

“Who?”

“The Taigs.”

“The DEP won’t allow it.”

•

Daisy Summerfield's Art

At the end of the counter at the center of the diner the judge married Taig and Daisy.

Garden flowers were in water glasses on the tables.

At the last minute Daphne took one and put it next to the cash register.

Taig surprised Daisy with his signet ring. She surprised him by crying tears of joy.

•

“How could your parents have liked the judge?” she asked Taig.

She loved the image of their ashes in clear water running through their land.

Taig said, “We can take them to Connecticut.”

“Where?”

“We’ll look at the condolence cards. How do you like being married?”

“It’s great for things like this.”

•

The Aquamarine Ring

“We may take the Taigs to Connecticut,” she told Daphne and Alan.

“Dr. Wadda had a beautiful stream,” Daphne said.

“You went to a lawn party there.”

“You remember?”

“I do!”

•

Vincent said, “I want to dance with the bride.”

“Everyone talks to the bride.” Daisy flung back her veil as if it were hair.

In her glasses, short sleeve plaid shirt, jeans, and moccasins, she looked very amusing.

“Thanks for getting the artwork into storage.”

“My pleasure.”

“You spent a day in Queens!”

“No problem.”

“Everything there?”

“Except your two sculptures and the Burchfield.”

Daisy Summerfield's Art

She looked for Taig and saw him sitting in a booth with Judge Nawi.

“How much?”

“Not too bad. Down payment on a small house.”

“How small?” she cried.

“Think of it as a watercolor you bought as a souvenir.”

“On a trip to the Midwest?”

“Be happy.”

•

A waiter asked if he should wrap up the rest of the cake.

Daisy shook her head.

Taig said, “Serve it to the Monday night dinner crowd.”

“That way we have a big party and we don't have to go!”

As her friends drove back to Manhattan, Daisy made a joke for the waiter.

•

“That was a totally glamorous wedding,” Melanie told Daphne.

“Thanks.”

The Aquamarine Ring

“It was like something from *Harpers Bazaar* in the seventies,” Vincent said.

Alan was in shock.

•

Driving home in Harrietta’s Land Rover, Taig told Daisy she could do what she wanted to the house.

“You can change the glass to screens and put in windows,” he said. But he had not yet sold it to her at Nawi’s office.

To her surprise, since she trusted no one, that happened the following week.

She offered to clean out his parents’ personal things and was keeping some of their clothes.

An article in *Harpers Bazaar* in the early seventies said, hang on to your old fabrics.

•

Daisy awoke slowly in Harrietta’s Duxiana, remembering her dream.

Daisy Summerfield's Art

A woman with long gray hair and long yellow fingernails said, "Wish I thing grap la mamba."

Or was it "n-mumba?"

Her body was disintegrating but her spirit was alive.

From the silence around her, Daisy knew Taig had left without waking her.

Daisy had a good reputation in the spirit world.

That was where her art came from. It didn't come from her head, and she didn't copy nature.

The self she expressed came from her work, not the other way around.

•

Taigs' parents had been clients of James Rose Antique China, but they didn't have old china.

They had two large platters painted by Picasso in the town of Vallauris.

•

The Aquamarine Ring

In the living room, in place of the Pollock, Daisy leaned an old mantel.

She displayed her thrift shop purchases on its slanted white shelf.

From a local antique shop she bought a gray and black cupboard the height of the mantel.

Her wallpaper-covered chest of drawers from Manhattan stood against the third empty wall.

The house was built in 1950, so the bookshelves were boards and brackets.

Books had to be distributed in artful groupings. Daisy planned to replace them.

The floor throughout the arcade and interior was a rough blue-green tile.

On it were sisal rugs, and furniture by George Nelson, Le Corbusier, Mies van der Rohe, and Arne Jacobsen.

•

Linda Leone had come from the city one day in June.

Daisy Summerfield's Art

Daisy met her at the train and took her across the street to the Bakers Cafe.

“I’ve never had such delicious food! I can’t believe you know so many people,” Linda cried.

They went out to the Land Rover, and Daisy drove three blocks to the thrift shop.

“It’s all one- and two-hour parking,” she explained.

Linda got a brand-new, pale green wool Armani jacket for thirty dollars.

Daisy was thrilled for her.

She turned on to Route 35. “That’s where the accident happened,” she said as they drove past.

She turned up a dirt road. The leaves on the old maples were large and green.

“You have two brick rugs by Margaret Kerr!”

“Seven,” said Daisy.

They walked around the outside of the house so Linda could see them.

The Aquamarine Ring

“What are those two heads doing under the willow?”

“That’s where the Taigs’ ashes are buried.”

“Good for you!” Linda said.

•

Daisy clumped down the stairs of the Horsefly Memorial House, to the thrift shop.

She had bought an old rhinestone pin for \$40, a tin streetcar for \$20, and a porcelein Edo cup for \$5.

As a dog returns to his vomit, she returned hoping to find the same treasures.

“You’re late,” the manager greeted her. “We almost marked you absent.”

Daisy had seen something interesting in a carton of consignments. Today it was in the showcase.

It was an incense burner with a dog on top.

One of the volunteers opened the case and took it out, and read her the label.

Daisy Summerfield's Art

“It’s an incense burner and it’s eighteen dollars. I don’t know why they charge so much.

“A young woman was looking at it earlier. They’ll reduce the price in a month.”

“May I see it?”

Daisy liked the flat S handles and brownish gray patina with green and black spots.

She said she’d take it.

“That young woman will be disappointed if she comes back and it’s not here.”

“If I don’t keep it, I’ll donate it back,” Daisy said.

She paid for the ancient Chinese bronze, put it in her car, and drove to the Bakers Cafe.

•

It was prestigious to have someone from the kitchen sit at your table.

Cheryl brought Daisy two brown rectangles on a tiny plate.

The Aquamarine Ring

She had been baking tofu, left it in the oven too long, and invented a new snack.

Daisy loved crispy things. She wolfed them down.

“I can tell you how to make them.”

“No thanks.”

Cheryl took the plate back to the kitchen and Daisy reserved gingerbread for dessert.

After lunch she drove home and examined the incense burner with her loupe.

Tiny bits of gold were caught in some rough patches.

She lay down with a Danielle Steele and a bag of Swedish fish, and the phone rang.

“Ms. Summerfield?”

“Yes!”

“This is Patti Lelong.”

“Hi, Patti!”

“Melanie Lefkowitz gave me your number.”

Daisy Summerfield's Art

"Tell me about the ring," Daisy said. "Did you have it made smaller or larger?"

"No."

"Melanie said bad things happened since you got it. What kind of things?"

"I fell down the stairs in the house I'm living in. I rent the top floor. When I left the emergency room, my crutch slipped and I broke my wrist."

"You were shaky!"

"It felt like someone kicked it."

"But no one was there."

"No . . ."

"And when you fell downstairs?"

"Someone pushed me."

"And no one was there."

"Do you think I'm crazy?"

"No! Where is the ring from?"

"The consignment shop in Brewster."

The Aquamarine Ring

“Oh, ho!”

“Not everything in consignment shops belonged to dead people,”

Patti said.

“If someone pushed you and no one was there, she is dead.”

“What do you think I should do?”

“Would you mind getting rid of it?”

“No.”

“But the ghost has to know it, so let me think.”

•

Patti pressed “Off,” feeling dreadful. She remembered Daisy as powerful, not flaky.

Chip and Larry mowed the lawn and did other odd jobs at the Harford.

Nice day, they called, and she agreed.

They picked up an old bookcase someone had thrown out and asked her if she wanted it.

She did, so they took it to her apartment and “humped” it upstairs.

Daisy Summerfield's Art

She liked them both, but Chip was the boss so she spoke more to him.

She liked hearing him sing high harmony with the songs on his radio and talk about his cat.

People were unfair to him.

He admitted he had a temper.

“I’m a good looking guy!” he shouted at the head of her stairs.
“Take me to the fucking party!”

•

“You should have called an ambulance,” the ER doctor told him.
“She could have head or spinal injuries.”

Chip brooded over the unfair criticism while the doctor set Patti’s leg.

•

After the same doctor set her wrist half an hour later, he let Chip drive her home.

Chip carried her upstairs, put her on her bed, and refused to give her the painkillers.

The Aquamarine Ring

He said she might become addicted.

•

He and Larry were obsessed with whether “Patti” was her real name.

They discussed her endlessly, even before Chip’s wife, Nancy, left him.

She would come home from work to find the house a mess, the Discovery channel blaring.

Larry was always there. Nancy didn’t know his last name. They refused to tell her.

She had headaches that wouldn’t go away, so she took the cat and moved out of the area.

Chip kept their small house and made some attempts to get her back.

•

Daisy loved physical beauty. She thought it was a gift from God, like her own talent.

Daisy Summerfield's Art

When she met Patti at the Kodaly years ago, she had to say something!

“What a beautiful name!”

“Thank you.”

“Is your real name Patricia?”

“Yes.”

“I had a doll named Patricia!”

•

While waiting for a table at the Bakers Cafe, Daisy watched a blond woman and two children.

She used to see them with the woman in her dream, whom everyone had tried to please.

Deafened by the uncultivated voices behind her, Daisy watched them leave the table.

Instead of clearing it, the waitress hugged the children and gave them each a cookie.

At last Daisy was seated.

“Who was the woman who was here?” she asked the waitress.

The Aquamarine Ring

“You don’t know Yasa?”

“I used to see her with an older woman.”

“That was Yolande. She just died. We all loved her.”

They thought Daisy had always lived there, and they loved some strange people at the Bakers Cafe.

“What is Yolande’s last name?”

Spasmo, she thought she heard.

•

Daisy stopped at a Manhattan-style shop and bought herself a sweater.

Swinging her shopping bag, she walked up the street to the Bakers Cafe.

Cheryl sat down at her table and Daisy asked, “Have you seen an aquamarine ring that looks like this?”

She took out a pen and drew it.

“I won’t say whose it is,” Cheryl said.

Everyone in Horsefly liked being cloaked in mystery.

•

Daisy Summerfield's Art

A hand clutched Taig's shoulder. "How's married life treating you?"

They were descending the steps from the station. The judge had been on the train.

It was raining hard. Taig looked for Daisy.

It was dark, and he looked down the sequined street for the black Land Rover.

His car was parked on a side street after getting its yearly inspection.

"Fine," he told the judge.

"The clerks are still talking about how I got your marriage license so fast."

"We're grateful to you."

"Ah, don't mention it."

"There's Mrs. Nawi," said Taig.

But the judge started griping about a cable program's campaign for safe driving.

"What the hell's the matter with them?"

The Aquamarine Ring

Daisy should feel proud, Taig thought, and there she was, coming to meet him, under a big umbrella.

•

While the Land Rover's wheels were being rotated, Daisy had a scone and coffee.

The blond woman came in with her two children.

Her hair was blond but she wasn't *a blonde*, as Natalia Ilyin says in *Blonde Like Me*.

No "perfectly normal-looking guy in a Brooks Brothers suit [would have] "dropped to his knees in front of [her] one day on Wall Street and begged, "Oh, baby, just give me one chance."

"Excuse me," said Daisy.

"Yes?"

"Do you know someone who had a ring with two aquamarines?"

"Yes. That was the ring you drew for Cheryl."

Cheryl came out and said, "It was Yolande's ring. I hope you don't mind that I told Yasa."

Daisy Summerfield's Art

“Not at all! Did you take it to the consignment shop in Brewster?” she asked Yasa.

The children stared at her.

“Hi,” she said.

They looked down.

“Why do you ask about the consignment shop? Did you see it there?”

“The woman who described it to me said it came from there.”

“Yes?”

“I know she'll give it to you.”

“Not if she paid for it. That is not right.”

“Somebody gave it to her.”

“Yes? Then she should keep it.”

“He said he bought it there.”

•

“Hi!” Patti said.

“The woman who owned the ring, Yolande Spasmo, died last month.”

The Aquamarine Ring

“You’re too much!”

“Now I have to find out where she lived.”

•

Melanie and her daughter and her daughter’s stepmother stood in front of the Kodaly, shivering in quilted coats.

The stepmother hailed a cab.

A handsome man came toward them carrying coffee and a white paper sack.

He saw a little girl in a beret get into a cab with an African American woman.

Melanie waved as it turned down Fifth Avenue.

“Is that your little girl?” he asked.

“Yes, that was Arnie and Lefty’s wife, Arleen.”

The three females reminded Alan of a tiny heart-shape Satsuma pin Daphne always wore because it was from Daisy.

“Did they see Jack Katz’s show?”

“Yes.”

Daisy Summerfield's Art

“Is Arnie going to paste scrap paper and feathers to twigs?” he probed.

“She may,” she said. “But don’t worry. Arleen won’t tell her she’s an artist.”

“That’s good.”

They laughed at Daisy’s pet peeve.

He held the door for her and they went in.

For this, his first major show, Katz had encrusted his twigs with plaster.

It made Alan think of guano. His expressive dark eyes shone with humor.

He had lived here all his life. Suddenly, at age 63, he was leaving. Frank Rizzi was taking his artists.

“Did you have lunch?” he asked Melanie.

“We ate at the coffee shop. Arleen had to take Arnie back to school.”

His eyes lost their shine. He didn’t understand their relationship.

“Do you have time to come to my office?”

The Aquamarine Ring

She said, "I'll make time."

He was too intelligent to rail against a changing world. He too was changing.

•

Melanie hung up her coat, checked her messages, and went to Alan's office.

"Don't worry about me and Vincent," she said. "Patti Lelong got us interviews at the Harford."

"Who's Patti Lelong?"

"She used to work here. She wanted Daisy's number."

"I wonder why!"

•

Alan had given Katz a show because Daisy loved his work. He let his artists guide him.

Forty years ago his father had the final say.

Philip Kodaly had been silent as Daisy unpacked her soft straw Mexican bag.

Daisy Summerfield's Art

Being young and living in a hotel, she had wrapped her clay figures in toilet paper.

José de Creeft was at the gallery that day, and he called her an artist.

Only an artist knows another artist. Only an artist can say what is art.

Now Katz was “hot,” proving once again that if an artist “hangs in there,” he or she will “make it.”

Alan put his face in his hands and laughed his high pitched laugh that ended, “Oh, my God.”

•

“Police! Open up!”

Patti saw a face at her window and screamed. She recognized Chip after he had disappeared.

She hobbled to the door and unlocked it.

Officer Tanaka opened it.

She said, “He’s out back.”

The Aquamarine Ring

He ran to her bedroom and his partner melted down the stairs and into the woods.

•

“So,” Ken said. “You movie star? Moder?”

“I work in bookstore.” Patti handed him her Tylenol. “Would you open this for me, please?”

“I thought you fell off horse on location.”

She was taking the pills with water but couldn’t help laughing.

“Bad scene,” he said, looking around the small attic. “No one helps you.”

Jealous, he thought.

Where is family, he wondered.

Same problem, maybe.

She thought *he* was beautiful. She said, “I have to go to a party at the museum. Will you be my date?”

•

“Do you remember I got a little book of poems at the flea market?”

Daisy asked Daphne.

Daisy Summerfield's Art

"You read me one about a lime tree."

She meant:

He and I like

Electric light

On nighttime trees.

"I remember I was so disappointed! But electricity was invented in 1879, so someone from Emily Dickinson's time could have written them."

She read her two more:

Call the sun an amber ball

Speak of stars as diamonds

Eyes flash jet

Teardrops are pearls

Hold these and a moonstone

In your hand

Put them into your mouth

The Aquamarine Ring

And swallow them

Perhaps you will feel better.

Last night I cried.

Today you sent

Gladiolas.

Oh, you are glad.

“Could they have been written then?”

“I don’t know,” Daphne said. “Poetry can seem old, especially if it was written by a young person.”

“When I got this notebook I wanted it to have value. I wanted to write a book like *Ancestors’ Brocades*, The Literary Debut of Emily Dickinson.

“I gave my poet the name Anna Newman. I’m reading a biography of Dickinson; Anna Newman is her cousin!”

“There you go,” said Daphne.

Daisy Summerfield's Art

"She married a man named Carleton, so her name should be Anna Carleton."

"Write a little poem about Carleton," Daphne suggested.

•

"I don't know out where the woman who owned the ring lived," Daisy told Patti.

"I looked in our two phone books, and there is no name like Spasmo.

"I thought we could bury the ring on her property and she'd feel comforted."

"Not a problem," said Patti. "I can find out by calling the stone cutters in the area."

•

"How are you doing?" asked Taig.

"Great!"

"Want to eat at the Blue Dragon tomorrow night?"

"We eat there every Friday night."

The Aquamarine Ring

“Would you like to have dinner with Richard and Yaroslawa Politano?”

“Who are they?”

“He’s a forensic pathologist. Your friend’s ring was stolen from his house. It belonged to his mother.”

•

The two couples met at the Blue Dragon.

“How old are your children?” Daisy asked Yasa.

“Three and five.”

They’re so big!

“Do you ever go to the thrift shop?”

“Yes, yes. Everything is from the thrift shop.”

Richard showed them his Timex. “Two dollars. It only needed a new battery.”

The door opened and they were called in.

They sat down and read the specials.

Daisy smiled at the servers.

Daisy Summerfield's Art

"I hear you're an artist," said Richard. "We know a writer for the paper who would interview you."

"I'd rather die!"

They ate biscotti and drank espressos.

Richard and Taig grabbed for the bill.

"Yes, yes," crowed Yaroslawa. "We pay to thank you for finding Yolande's ring."

Daisy said, "We pay because we did not hire a babysitter."

•

Chip was lonely in jail.

The ring had been lying on the hall table when he waited for Mrs. Politano to pay him.

Larry was in the truck. That made him an accessory.

"Does Larry have a last name?" asked the officer.

"Spasmo."

"*What did you call me?*"

•

The Aquamarine Ring

“I looked up Anna Newman. She died in 1887. Her sister Clara died in 1920.

“Too bad she’s not your poet.”

“I’ll change it,” said Daisy. “Artists are psychic, and psychics get scrambled.”

“You should have the notebook dated by a conservator. I’ll get you some names,” Daphne said.

•

Daisy had a block of kiln dried wood, the stand from her Haniwa head.

She went to her closet to get it. She measured its square tapered stick, got her miter box and X-acto saw, and arranged the stick in it.

For a split second she managed to balance the stand on the legs she had cut.

She had a Buddha charm to put in a hermit’s hut, a jointed blown-glass doll to dance from a wire in a theater, a clay skeleton to leave in a cave.

Daisy Summerfield's Art

Her plastic skeleton charm with missing limbs could hang in a haunted room.

In holy arks, stones clad in velvet cases would contain the story of creation.

Strung on wire across the openings would be more bits of Harrietta's clothing.

Daisy would cut one of her own shirts to make a chambray curtain for a waxed sandstone cave.

“Would you like company on Friday?” asked Daphne.

•

Daisy parked in front of Bakers Cafe, got a coffee, and went down to the train.

As she waits we have time to observe that in the bright hot kiln of life our characters harden as the years evaporate, covering us with a glaze of memories.

She saw the light on the engine and threw her cup in the trash.

The train came. The doors opened, and Daphne got out.

The Aquamarine Ring

“You look so cute!” Daisy cried, walking toward her.

“I dressed like you.”

Daisy rubbed a chalk mark off her right rear tire, and they went in to the cafe.

She started to introduce Daphne to Cheryl.

Cheryl said, “We’ve met. You didn’t know I made your wedding cake!”

They got a table and sat down.

Daisy took off her ring and handed it to Daphne. “Can you read the initials?”

“I wanted to see this. It looks like *HI*.”

“I thought it was *HT*, but it belonged to Harrietta’s great-great grandfather Hiram Isaacson from New Orleans. He was a colonel in the Civil War.

“It means a lot to me that he was Jewish.”

“I’m sure it does.” Daphne hated to be reminded of Daisy’s separateness.

Daisy Summerfield's Art

"Whenever I heard the words Early American, I thought, I don't belong here."

"That's wrong!" Daphne said.

"Then I got a book of Jewish American Folk Art at the Jewish Museum.

"I wish I'd kept it. I have beautiful books of old synagogues and art objects. Maybe it's still in print."

"If it is, I'll get it for you. I'll get it for you anyway."

"I can call them."

"I'm going there next week."

Daphne really liked the food.

"This is a wonderful salad."

"And isn't the bread delicious?" Daisy tried to make her single slice last.

"It's terrific."

•

"Look at you driving this big rig!"

Daisy made a right turn.

The Aquamarine Ring

“I never learned to drive.”

“Living in the city, you don’t have to.”

“You do everything well.”

•

They walked around outside.

Daphne pointed to the willow and asked, “Is that where the Taigs are buried?”

“They don’t need a memorial. Their names will live in the provenances of their paintings.”

Daphne said, “I’d like to be buried there—with Alan and you and Taig.”

Daisy unlocked the door and snatched up a little bronze head of Vishnu.

“This is my only other hollow one. I put them over bamboo stalks.”

“Where’s the Burchfield?”

“I want to sell it and build a studio.”

“Where?”

Daisy Summerfield's Art

They went to Taig's old room. "Out there on the north side, in the bamboo."

"Why don't you use this room?"

"It does face northeast," Daisy said.

"You didn't have any light in the city."

"I had beautiful light!"

"Now show me the poetry notebook."

It was forty years old, but Daphne didn't say it. These projects sustained Daisy until she could work.

She said, "Alan is coming with Taig."

Daisy was exhausted. She would be 61 next month. Most afternoons she fell asleep wearing her glasses.

"Would you like an espresso?" she asked.

"Do you know how to use the machine?"

Daphne watched with mounting concern as Daisy tried to insert and lock the filter holder.

At last she succeeded.

The Aquamarine Ring

In forty years they had never spent this much time together.

“We have reservations at the inn. We’re looking at houses tomorrow and Sunday.”

“What would you do out here?”

“We’ll call you every morning and find out.” Daphne laughed at the look on Daisy’s face.

Daisy picked up her pack of American Spirits. “Want to come outside?”

“You know what I’d like to see?” Daphne asked, watching her smoke. “The thrift shop.”

Daisy put out her cigarette. “Let’s go!”

•

The yellow maple leaves were at their finest in the late afternoon sun.

The traffic was a little heavy. Daisy rarely went out at this time for that reason.

“I’m psyched,” Daphne said as they got out of the car.

Daisy Summerfield's Art

Ten minutes later they were back in the Land Rover, fastening their seat belts.

“That’s not where you got the Japanese lunch box!”

“Yes, yes. That’s where I got all those great things!”

•

As they entered the house they heard the phone.

It was Patti Lelong calling Daisy a genius. The ghost was no longer troubling her.

She had gone to the cemetery . . .

Daisy laughed and exclaimed, and Daphne smiled empathically.

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