

The Glass Children

He liked to hold them up to the full moon where they would fall and rise through silver ripples of light. Or, if held at a distance from the viewer, turn the night sky all liquid and glossy with stars. His mother had bought them years ago in the little gift shop of the Metropolitan Art Museum as a wedding gift for a friend but then had decided to keep them for herself. Usually they sat above the piano, but someone had apparently moved them, and their absence, however temporary, was causing him enormous anxiety. As a watcher of things, of mere objects, whether common or unusual, he prided himself on an innate ability to construct narratives about them. How they lived their lives in the glass world, the only world, after all, that they knew. Their glass parents and glass upbringing and beautifully transparent glass religion where nothing was hidden and everything could be held up to the stars. He would imagine whole novels where the glass children grew up and fell in love, and peering into their glass lovers, saw with marvelous clarity the infinite spaces and depths and distances within their little glass bodies and glass souls. This continued far into the night, and when his imagination began to fail, to tire and falter beneath the weight and mystery of this glass world, all he could do was put his hands on the piano keys and begin to play. And as he played—strange little broken melodies of his own invention, a little like Eric Satie, but awkwardly improvised—he looked up, and there they were, his glass children, returned to their places among family photographs and small ceramic vases and figurines. And of course he imagined them to be happy, filled with silver ripples of light as if they were falling and rising, as if they had discovered again their appropriate positions in the glass world and could never be, and here he paused, looking for a concluding tonic chord, broken.