

The Dream Speaks Back



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LIFTING THE STONE

— Leslie —

I woke up this morning in a short, soft bed, tucked behind the door of a room the size of a train compartment. In my mind it was half-dark, so I could see the cupboard at the bottom of the bed and the planes and rockets on the wallpaper. Outside I could hear birdsong and the chink-chunk of a milk float; inside was quiet. My eyes travelled the room, exploring the long wooden box beneath the window and the thick-lined curtains. The box had a red-cushioned seat which became, as I watched it, a low chest of drawers where my mum on washing days would stow away my socks and undies. That's in the top two drawers, both with plastic handles, while the wide drawer beneath has everything I need for my imaginary journey. It's as if there's a weight pressing down on the box; it's bowed in the middle like a worn sofa, and the big bottom drawer often jams.

The room is a capsule on a launch pad and I'm counting down, but only because I know it's too early to get up. As I count I imagine my dad's voice telling me to stay where I am. He's the Deadwood Sheriff behind the door and he's got me covered. If I'm at the window when he bursts in, he'll shout, "Get yourself back to bed!"

The room opens out into a house, a three-bedroom semi, with floral wallpaper and matching curtains. Inside is empty and unreal. The exact size is hard to make out. Look up, it's a cathedral; down, and it's a doll's house; close your eyes and it's a dungeon. There's a faint, reflec-