

Neighbours

PEOPLE NEXT DOOR used to pitch their trash over the back fence – bottles (cracked), papers (wet), yoghurt cups, cut grass, grenades of scraps. A while we threw them back. It never worked, the things kept coming over the fence. Upset (they said) because our willow wept leavings on their lawn, our kitten trampled their vegie patch, the walls were thin and we yelled (in a strange tongue), our cottage disillusioned their sense of street. Awkwardly we met. We pruned the trees (where we could), tried (truly) to make cat comprehend, agreed to holler softly (am sure we did). They said they'd attempt to keep their rubbish in check (lobbing it over was habit, see). But no amend: if anything, more trash! plus two of our windows smashed. One night, enough of this, we bundled up most of what we'd copped and climbed in through their loo. Scattered the stuff across every room, returned their refuse till the floors were full, couches a mess, walls and doorways smeared and the hallway dirt. They tried to resist; but we too quick. A cop turned up. Ordered a truce, told us take it all back. This happened a few times, but nothing helped. In the end, after we'd invested our best, sullied utterly each other's abode – it stopped. They stopped, we stopped (I forget who began). Since then, nowhere near friends, still eye each other askance. Occasionally OK we might grin a bit (bitterly) over the fence, half-wave. Maybe swap words about the neighbours.

Shadow

THE KEEPER of the Registry of Dreams remembers nothing of his past. He can't recall the child he must have been, the boy who ran and shouted and threw stones, the youth who kissed his sweetheart in the rain, the lanky young apprentice conjuring files, the expert promoted to the tallest desk. He knows only the rhythms of his task, the day-and-nightly rubrics of the soul that he must catalogue and annotate, while his own history slumbers, lost among the long-forgotten archives of the self. And when *he* sleeps, his dreams are a single dream, it reappears the moment he shuts his eyes and lets the anthem of his weariness enfold him. It is a music woven seamlessly somewhere within that unremembered age; a dance of might-have-been; a stupendous fugue of the uncounted voices, the unnumbered worlds that populate his Registry. And it does its work. It nourishes the planet of his heart, corrects its orbit – so that when he wakes, he will want only to resume his craft, continue to retrieve and gloss and catalogue, tap with a soft proprietorial pride upon the console of his cluttered bench each time another absence is restored, an end resolved, a consequence attained. But there's one region of the night he'll never glimpse. The keeper of the Registry of Dreams will not recall the child *I* was, the little boy who ran, the youth who kissed, the paper conjurer destined to shadow him. That dream is mine alone.