

K. R. BARGER

The Cemetery

My memory points like compass arrows:

North, South, East, West, I chant.

I'll find them near a pine tree, I know for sure—

Like Mother selling makeup door to door,

I go grave to grave.

My high heels leave little air holes in the ground.

I send down each little shaft my most polite,

Southern accented apologies for stepping too near

The eternities of Fraley or Paxton, Sutphin, Fitzgerald.

Finally, I take my new husband to meet my parents

And quietly ask God to grant me the strength to walk

Up to them, be a woman, a wife.

The sought stone sticks up like an invitation.

Undoubtedly they are bare bones

But I am glad we dressed well. I think

Of Mother's final face—beautiful, not sick at all,

Made up with the last of her blush, lipstick, eye shadow.

Beside her, my father in his only suit,

His heart beneath his pocket handkerchief.

I faintly hear my husband's voice say

"We don't need to be here anymore,

Really, we don't"—

All I really hear is myself praying louder, louder:

The Lord is my Shepherd I shall not want...

I'm afraid I'll abandon my black heels, lying on their sides

Like open mouths screaming to me as I run,

A cry baby, right back to the rental car,

The long drive to the regional airport, the plane

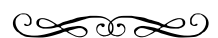
North to Boston; its vapor trail,

Like my Southern voice and sorrows, vanishing.

HERON TREE

2 March 2014

herontree.com/barger1



ABOUT K. R. BARGER

K. R. Barger received an MFA from the University of Iowa and lives in Boston. Her book *Satellite Self* was published by Eighth Sister Press, and her work most recently appeared in *The 2River View*. Her website is located at krbarger.org.

