

Take What Comes

Sara Lippmann

The Kinks are playing *everyone's a dreamer* when the blanket behind us starts to slide. Friday night on the hill smells like weed; the lawn a patchwork of mandala and plaid. Chairs block the view, prime seats for ticket holders but we are 12, we have no tickets, we'd been dropped off by someone's older brother's girlfriend, we got wrecked in the parking lot on cans stamped in ribbon and now we've scaled the gate.

Now the blanket is closer, now we touch. They are boys with good shit; kind, they boast like we don't know quality, which we don't.

It doesn't matter who you are

We are stoners tonight. Cleared our first dime bag in the playground that afternoon, sifted through seeds atop an asphalt turtle, then wondered what was wrong with us, we were fine, more than fine, we felt nothing at all, how were we supposed to feel?

Somewhere, truth meets lies: I should've been home singing *hineh matov*—"how good it is to be sitting around together"—praying not trespassing, tearing apart a braided egg loaf instead of pulling on a pipe, welcoming the weekly Sabbath queen.

The boys pick their skin and spit. Stop eating yourself, dude. They are older, but not by much, they attend a private school that ends presumptively in Friends. Do we want to get friendly? *Kinky*? We don't even roll our eyes. Instead we take what comes. Grass, sweat, resin. I singe my bangs on a zealous flame so now I am burning, twisting to ash.

It is easy to conflate wings with stars: fireflies, Cassiopeia. A second ago I was literally on fire. I tip a sad Camel to the light.

In his empty family room my father screens slides of damaged lungs, coal lungs, charred as bone, porous as coral, spongy lungs, lungs splashed purple and pink, gobstopper lungs in pretty, pretty pastel but let this be a warning: if you go on like this *celluloid heroes never really die*. His projector clicks and hums.

We pair off, disappear. Boys throw loose arms of greased flannel, as if it were cold. We are hot. Our knees prick with the dog-itch of boiled wool. The song becomes another song. I grope the muzzy dark, and it's a scary/funny feeling, like making your way through a haunted house, where you don't know what's around the stairs, who might jump out at you. I could laugh or cry. My chest pushes against its cage. I am alone but not. There's breath on my neck. *Suck hard*. All of us are after something. When the smoke comes for me, I take it, hold the entire world in, as if I'll never let go.



The Kinks

"Celluloid Heroes"

Everybody's in Show-Biz

08/1972

RCA