

## Cobweb Pieces

by Charlie Lovett  
Hawker College



Old mixing bowls that still smelt like plastic. Off white. Yellowed by age. Yellowwhite bowl, yellowwhite mixer, yellowwhite fridge. Shee fridge. Eelyeam kettle. Orange kettle. Kettle coloured fruit in a metalwire basket on the bench. Faded magazines spouting the benefits of Plasties and Ectomies. Holiday in Ai'Kadif!

A frozen dahpel rotated in the microwave.

Eavet pulled the plug in the sink and watched the water spiral. Dishes collected from yesterday sparkled clean on the draining board.

Never anticipating the future, she didn't think the washing up liquid would hurt her. Year after year her hands got drier. Dermatitis and weakskinned were the same word to her.

It was the time when the sky pales to freezing and the horizon hides behind fog. When people sit too close to radiators and lose their temperature in pain. When there's cold and hotcold. Thawing, burning, sweatingchest numbfingered hotcold. Eavet's hands were hotcold when she slipped the dahpel from the microwave, holding the plate by the edges when it started to hurt.

She swiped a fork and sat down in an armchair, one piece in a well worn set. The flowers on the fabric never grew and never died. Time was a nonconcept to them. They were static and forever, change inflicted upon them by stains and tears. Pale notches inflicted on a tree by an axe. Their sap ran.

Eavet shared the fabric with Daniel, who was sat sideways on the three person sofa with his knees drawn to his chest, bowl of left over mahzwik perched upon them. The spoon he wielded dipped clumsily through the broth and barely made it to his mouth. He was seventeen, acne like rocks in a pale dirt road, with a sweater full of holes and no bloodparents.

The television was their shared light in the night. It printed on them haphazardly, rubber stamp inked with pictures. Slamming sticking peeling and lifting. Over and over.

Daniel was not Eavet's bloodson. He made strange sounds. He almost squawked when he talked. Eavet couldn't understand anything he said. They both had taken to acting things out and Pointing. So much Pointing.

But she mothered him all the same, that bird that was not her own.

Daniel was a bird with a growl and teeth that showed the widest when he wanted to play or fight, the two indistinguishable to anyone but him. In Eavet's lacy valance-windowed, silverware just for show, cigarette-smoke house, he was monstrous. She made him sit on the front step and dig dirt from the soles of his shoes with a stick. She made him go back and wipe up the brown milk mug circles he left on the counter when he overpoured his hot chocolates. She made him go outside for at least one hour a day, and she let him break that rule if they both agreed the weather was horrible.

Daniel was a teenager and she couldn't keep all his Mess within her lines if she tried.

Eavet had lost her bloodson on the Jam Jar Day. He'd tottered his way into the pantry, small hands turning everything over, once, twice, I can't eat that, put it back. Left unattended with a recently emptied jar in hand, he had been entrapped in silent estrangement by her husband, the distance sweetened with sticky fingers and cheeks, sealed lid-shut and carefully labelled with fear. Her son was terrified of nearly everything now.

Of car engines and doors slamming and people raising their voices.

Of water.

He used to cower behind table legs at the sight of her. It had taken a long time to remind him that fyeleads were more scared of him than he was of them and that panicked screaming didn't ease the sting of soap in his eyes. His fear was a bruise she could only curiously press despite her efforts to heal. The movement of her love had been restricted. Her limbs had gone to sleep when she needed them most. Her body still prickled forever with the things she could not do or say.

Now he didn't see her at all.

Her son was grown and lived on his own, and with one pair of heels he'd be her height.

Pieces of every Eavet that had moved in the space before her had broken off and were stranded in the air. Cobwebs. Mist. Syrup. The longer she lived in the house the thicker the air grew and the more often she sighed. Thick air was hard to breathe.

With his curly hair, pieces of her son were there too.

And her husband. He would be back at nine.

The kitchen tap leaked and ached.

Eavet scraped neat lines into the meatpastry remains of the dahpel and set her plate on the low table before her. She stood.

"I'm going out," she said.

"I still don't understand you," Daniel said back.

She pointed to herself and then the front door. He nodded and stuck his thumb up.

Armed with silver coins and an umbrella, Eavet braved the rivery road. A car hissed past, thin rain caught in the headlights, shocked into suspension. She was going to the grocers to buy a Secret Stash of food. For her and Daniel. For when the rain went away and they could (partially) trust the magazines and go to Ai'Kadif.

There were farms down there. Clean clear air. They could teach each other to speak.

Curly haired boy in rubber boots, shorter than field grass and sunk in mud. Round in his puffy jacket, peering through a fence at the docile animals beyond.

Eavet gathered her skirt as she crouched beside him. She Pointed.

"What's that animal?"

Deeney rocked side to side as he thought.

"A... Tehn!"

"Good job! And what sound does it make?"

"Nyee!"

Eavet picked him up and tucked him into her waistside. "Nyee!"

She bounced him slightly and he giggled. "Nyee!"

By the roadside they nyeed at the tehns together. Pieces of them broke off, hovering by the fence forever.