

Kathryn Mockler and Gary Barwin

TOWER

GARY BARWIN

A reader holds her fingers against a window's cool glass. I hold my fingers against the other side. We look at each other through the window. If it were not for the glass, our fingertips would touch.

We remain in this position for a long time. The sun rises. It sets. It rises again. The years pass. We both become old. Our parents die. Friends. Then our children.

"This window is on the twenty-second floor," the reader finally says. "And I am on the inside," I say.

BLUE TEACUP

KATHRYN MOCKLER

The blue teacup purchased from the thrift store is communicating with me telepathically. It tells me what time to go to bed and which restaurants will give me food poisoning. It's good to have friends in high places. The blue teacup demands I leave it on the counter beside the sink, and if I follow these instructions, it won't let anything bad happen to my family. This is a shakedown. This is blackmail, but I decide not to question the teacup's authority because you never know. If this is a dream, it's not a nice one. The nice dreams are the ones where I'm floating up to the twenty-second floor and watching you on the inside finish your seafood plate. You're not allergic to seafood, but I am. I try to tell you this as you grin and hold up your lobster, but you can't hear me through the glass. Too bad. I also had a joke I wanted to tell, but I guess I'll save it for another levitation.

THE COMPARTMENT

KATHRYN MOCKLER

Inside my body I found a
compartment and inside
that compartment was
another compartment and
inside that compartment
was another compartment
and inside that compartment
was a green pea and inside
the green pea was another
green pea and inside that
green pea was nothingness
and nothingness and nothing-
ness and I certainly don't mean
to suggest the feelings were
neutral but rather they were
intense and magnified and
the nothingness grew into a
large shadow that felt like
an x-ray blanket placed
over the sky feeling heavy
but still allowing everyone
to move their arms and their
legs and their digits and
some could smile and some
could not smile and if you
ask me how I'm doing today
this will be my answer.

WATER

KATHRYN MOCKLER

If you are feeling hopeless,
then give up hope. I won't
tell anyone. I won't tell you
to put on a brave face or feel
better about yourself. I won't
tell you to wash your hair or
pick up the dirty clothes. You
don't know where to begin. I
don't know where to end. We
are water. We slosh this way
and that. Sometimes we splash
up against a boat, a dock, the
shore. Fish swim through us.
Rocks sink. There are pebbles
and little pieces of glass and
there are sticks and there are
shells and there are fragments
of bone. The garbage floats—
a plastic cup, a beer can. Some-
times the sand beneath us gets
stirred up. Sometimes it sits
perfectly still.