



THE DOOR

Photography by Charles Masters

Story by Everett Heath

Looking up at her apartment Victoria remembered her lights were on a timer, otherwise she'd have to tell the taxi to pull over for her to climb the stairs and switch them off. But she wasn't going to be gone long, she thought, so either way it wouldn't matter.

The city was awake but too early for full stop traffic, and the taxi ride to La Guardia went by in quick time. Mostly because her taxi driver was pleasant as she talked about how she might have found love again at fifty-two--a very nice man with a steady job who wanted to get married. She was a recently retired prison guard, now a new taxi driver, back in the city she thought she'd never return to. Just beginning her shift, her head almost touched the car ceiling. Sheila Jordan didn't look fifty-two, and she was still pretty.

Two and a half hours south. Victoria woke from her doze to find her Coke and peanuts on the empty window seat tray where she left them. The flight attendant must have refreshed her drink, because the ice had not melted and she had dozed off for almost an hour. The previous night Victoria hadn't been able to fall back asleep after her dream.



Still, after many hours later, the door was as easily recalled in full detail in her mind as viewing a photo on her phone. The Chrysler door in her dream Victoria knew well. It was slightly open and the inviting soft light from the other side has been too much to ignore. She purchased a one-way ticket and left her apartment with an overnight case.



The motel was still there. She had stayed there many times, years ago when she had to. And recently, a few more times. The room was as worn as she felt, but the owners, now ancient, were the same and the rooms were familiar. There was comfort in that, although loneliness was still etched in the faded wallpaper.

If they would just replace the wallpaper.

And the blinds.



Victoria needed more sleep.



Awakening, and grateful that the day was still here and the weather was sunny, she took a taxi to the restaurant that served breakfast all day. Victoria stared for a while at the STOP sign, wondering if it was also meant for her, right here, right now. The taxi driver rolled down his window.

“Ma’am, you alright Ma’am?”

“Thank you.” Victoria had gotten out on the street side.

“I’ll call you in an hour.”

The taxi driver was unsure what Victoria said might actually happen, and drove off with a wave that suggested his doubt.



She knew before entering the restaurant the owners were not the same as years ago. But breakfast was still served all day. She took her time, first drinking two cups of coffee, then ordering waffles, two eggs over easy, and bacon. All the while she watched the patrons, and in doing so, her internal pace slowed, and she felt willingly trapped in the moment.

An hour later Victoria called the same taxi driver and they headed south and east for twenty minutes. The last time she visited the house Victoria just stood in front and memorized the sight. This time she circled the house and walked the lot from front to back. She had no bad memories of this house.

“Airport please.”



A photograph of a single-story house with light blue horizontal siding and white trim. The house features a gabled roof with white fascia boards and a central entrance. The entrance is sheltered by a white porch supported by four white columns with decorative brackets. A small mailbox is mounted on the wall to the right of the door. The number "4003" is painted vertically on the left side of the porch. The house sits on a foundation with white decorative trim at the base. Some greenery and a small red flower are visible in front of the steps.

4003

On the way she purchased a one-way ticket back to La Guardia. She never knew if she would stay a day longer or not. When she dreamed of the door she bought a ticket.

On the flight she fought to stay awake, drinking coffee.

The taxi ride back to her apartment was not the same as the early morning. Victoria missed Sheila Jordan. Looking up she became aware of her hunger but didn't tell the taxi driver to stop.

Victoria returned to her apartment.

The lights were still on.

She soon was asleep.

She wasn't sure she wanted the dream to stop.

PAGODE