

Mariah Krochmal

Harvest

Autumn is standing at the sink looking out the kitchen window. There's a mountain of dirty dishes but no dish soap. Autumn doesn't have a face; Autumn doesn't know how to talk.

Margaret gets off the bus at 2:45 each afternoon. It's a Tuesday but Margaret doesn't like Tuesdays, or to say the word Tuesday, because Tuesday was her stillborn baby sister's name. Tuesday is lying down in the rose garden. There's an abundance of new rose buds but not enough sun to make them blossom. January comes over to Margaret's house on Tuesdays and Wednesdays to do homework and tend to the garden. January always has cold hands, January can't sit still. It's about 3 o'clock now, and January wasn't on the bus. Margaret questions this but doesn't have time to think much of it. She calls Matthew. Matthew is her next-door neighbor. Matthew doesn't answer the phone. Discouraged and confused by this Margaret goes down into her basement and cries. Upstairs she hears pacing back and forth, nervous pacing. She hears a man talking loudly in a language that she doesn't understand. She wonders if maybe it's Matthew speaking Biblical verses again, but quickly realizes that the voice is too deep, and no one can get in through the front door. Margaret doesn't have a front door. Margaret hears footsteps coming down the stairs. It's about quarter of four now so it's getting darker outside and there are no lights in Margaret's basement. It's Summer, Margaret's friend from school. "Hi Margaret" she says in a soft tone of voice. "Did you miss me? Sorry I haven't come around much, I've been much too busy. What are you doing down here all alone? Where's Jan?" "January wasn't on the bus today" Margaret replies. "I don't know what happened to her. Maybe she's sick. I tried calling Matthew but he didn't answer. Who is upstairs? I heard a man's voice but I didn't

recognize the tone.” “I didn’t see anyone when I came in, sorry.” Margaret is royally confused, but not concerned. People come in and out all the time, no one ever gets hurt. Summer sits down on Margaret’s floor. “Got anything to eat? I’m starved, I haven’t eaten all day.” “We can check the garden if it’s not too dark out yet.” Margaret and Summer climb out through the small basement window. It’s fairly dark outside, but not too dark. Margaret and Summer pick tomatoes and Carrots. Summer steps on a broken mason jar, “OUCH, goddamn it!” she says. “Don’t talk like that, Summer.” Matthew says. “Margaret, why haven’t you called? I’ve been at home all day, we haven’t hung out in a while.” “I called you at around 2:45 Matthew, you didn’t answer.” “Where’s January?” he asks, completely disregarding Margaret’s last statement. “She’s with Tuesday.” The man from upstairs says. “She’s in the rose garden, we got her back.” He says, Autumn is standing beside him. She has four dirty dinner plates in her hands, both in which are cracked like old mistreated leather and starting to bleed. “Margaret we’re all hungry. Why haven’t you called any of us? We haven’t hung out in a while.” He says. Everyone sits down, except for Margaret. She is crying. “What do you mean got her back? She asks. What did January ever do to you? I don’t know who you are, or who she is, or why you’re here.” “Sure you do, dear.” The man says. His voice is soft and harmless. “We got her back.” He repeats again. “WHAT do you mean got her back? Why won’t you answer any of my questions, who are you, and why are you here?” “January was taking too much of you.” He says. “You don’t call anymore. And you know who I am Margaret.” “Who is she then? What’s wrong with her, I can’t see her face, she doesn’t speak” “Margaret” everyone says, weirdly synchronized. “You know who she is, you know who we all are. Jan got what she deserved.” “Matthew? Summer? Since when are you on their side? What did you do to January, tell me now” Margaret is crying even more. Autumn accidentally breaks a plate and it cuts her. She’s bleeding even more now. She signs with her hands and tells Margaret to join them. “Margaret sit down, spend time with us. We’re all starving, we rarely hangout anymore.”