

*Ty-D-Bowl. Cling. Sani-flush. Vanish. That's right: vanish.*



It's another day of snow. Today it's tiny pellets wanting to be ice. She waits for the boys to get off to school (thumps and shouts, a single crash, front door left hanging open), waits for the cops, waits for Donna's father to finish his coffee and burnt toast he didn't complain about. While she waits, she stares out the window at the sky, smoldering dull white-gray; at this day, another bleached-dry thing without color.

A useless memory circles: last October, she drove Donna to Hickory Hill Park. Donna was collecting autumn leaves for a school art project. Something about pressing them between wax paper, which messed up her iron something awful because they did it wrong. Or the art teacher didn't care about moms' irons. Anyway, it was supposed to be Donna's father driving Donna to the park because he liked doing outdoor things.

Instead, she had to. The boys had a football game or detention or a bowling party or something, and Donna's father had to take care of whatever that was. So she was outdoors, helping Donna pick out dead leaves. The day was moody with looming rain, and rushed. Donna's mother and father were hosting bridge that night, and she had a thousand and one things to cook and clean before seven other couples showed up for drinks, dinner, dessert, and cards. Instead, she was hunching over, searching out the reddest maple leaf, the most perfectly symmetrical oak leaf, an elm leaf — though the elms all died off from Dutch elm disease — and so on. The teacher gave out a list, and rather than quickly and efficiently grabbing up leaves and heading home — like anyone would — Donna insisted on the most perfect example. A leaf would seem fine, but no: too many spots, tiny holes from a bug, a short stem, uneven color, too small. Red leaf after red leaf, but none “red enough.” Exasperating, when back home the Jell-O mold needed four hours to set, and the carrots to peel and and and. And here she was holding