

2016

A Simple Time

Angela M. Anastasi
Syracuse University

Follow this and additional works at: <https://surface.syr.edu/intertext>



Part of the [Fiction Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Anastasi, Angela M. (2016) "A Simple Time," *Intertext*: Vol. 24 : Iss. 1 , Article 10.
Available at: <https://surface.syr.edu/intertext/vol24/iss1/10>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by SURFACE. It has been accepted for inclusion in Intertext by an authorized editor of SURFACE. For more information, please contact surface@syr.edu.



A SIMPLE TIME

Angela M. Anastasi

Fireflies blinked around the berry bushes that lined the front steps of 110 Orchard Road. The bushes never actually produced edible berries, a fact my brother and I were always reminded of every time our mother would thoughtfully swat the round, ashy spheres of potentially poisonous fruits from our hands. Regardless, the alleged venomous fruit never scared away the millions of tiny fireflies that hummed around the bushes at dusk on each humid summer night.

The sky was a watercolor of orange, blue, and purple as my brother, dad, and I climbed the five steps to the front porch of our cozy twin home in Ridley Park, Pennsylvania—a town filled with people who sought out more from life, hoping that this residency was merely a stepping stone to something more. Plenty of people come here looking for a house; absolutely no one comes here looking for a home.

Our five-room house was tight, and the neighborhood lacked luster and excitement, but I was three years old and unaware. The hike up those five stairs was a journey. My pigtails swung in the summer breeze as I lunged forward to make it up those giant steps to the front door of our castle, with one hand out to protect my little brother, and the other in the safe grip of my father's hand.

When the journey was finally over, my father whipped me up into his arms and we stood on the edge of the thin iron fence on the top step. Looking out around us, the world seemed endless. In his arms, I pointed out the most beauti-

ful and wondrous objects in the far and wide world with my best three-year-old vocabulary, “See the moon, Daddy? See the moon?” It was large and bright and amazing. Everything seemed amazing, back when I thought poisonous berries were the only things my mother had to protect me from. When my father still had time to spare each evening. When my brother still wanted to go on adventures with his older sister. Each night in the park was infinite, just like the summer nights and the lightning bugs and the life we had on 110 Orchard Road.

•••

POST-IT PRESENCE

It was a yellow Post-It note that had only a few words on it. I had been receiving them for years...ever since I could read and appreciate the value of the money that it was stuck to. The last one came on a Friday, when I was returning from a night out. I was still floating from the intoxicating night of singing and dancing, but the weight of the envelope pulled my body back to earth and anchored my heart to the ground.

I saw the tiny envelope in my mailbox, and instantly knew its contents from the handwriting that I had become so familiar with. My hands began to tremble as I slid my finger under the white tab of the envelope. Knowing exactly what it was, the familiarity suddenly filled me with a sadness that I could not explain. I pulled

INTERTEXT 2016 | 21

out the twenty with the yellow Post-It and read my grandma's catch phrase: "Treat yourself to something you like." No signature necessary.

She was hundreds of miles away from me, and yet, here she was; her presence in the form of a two-inch sticky square paper. I could feel her droopy eyelids, tired from years of cooking and cleaning and nurturing, smiling at me

through her thick bifocal glasses, knowing what shenanigans I had just engaged in, yet content that I was enjoying my life and making my own mistakes. Words of pride and praise echoed in the background as I read the six words over and over again, though I had committed them to memory years ago. Those six words said everything that I needed to hear.



TALKING HANDS

My mother has the hands of an old maid, leaving the impression that she has spent her life scouring dishes and laundering by hand. They are wrinkly and by no means pretty. They look like they should belong to an elderly grandmother and, in fact, they do—my grandmother bears the very same burden. Even in the peak of her youth, photographs show her wilted, gray hands gripping her wedding flowers, the waist of her small boy, and the hand of her now deceased husband. Her hands have experienced life.

In conversation, their hands wave at each other as if they are yelling—in reality it is just a signal of friendly gossip. It is the unspoken language that bonds them together. My hands speak the language too, oftentimes to people

who don't know it as well as I do. People notice my hands. Their movements and gestures finish sentences when my words cannot. I look down at my own hands and I see the life of a thousand years' time. I am only eighteen years old, yet I am always reminded that my talkative hands are three times that age.

The three of us convene in the kitchen together. Our hands smooth icing over homemade sugar cookies, set dozens of forks next to sets of mismatched plates, and greet the people that walk through the door. Through their kind gestures, they progressively age.

My grandmother is proof that the gestures will never stop, and the language will never die. People respond to our dry, wrinkly hands, but with each wrinkle comes strength, and each dry patch shows pride.

Illustration by Flickr user Ashley Van Haefen, CC BY 2.0: <https://www.flickr.com/photos/wikimediacommons/16396454115/>.

