

Wilderness House Literary Review 15/2

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Mother's Not Home

THE INSURANCE SALESMAN CALLS NICK AGAIN.

"Is your mother home?"

How does Nick address a question whose response is always negative? He still speaks of Mother in present tenses, until emptiness reminds him.

Mother loved practical jokes. She claimed to be a Romanov, a famous pianist, an actress, while pursing her lips to give the stories what she called verisimilitude.

Then there was last year, twisted metal, shattered glass, scars.

"She ran off with a milkman."

With a milkman, there's the possibility of return.

"I'm very sorry." The salesman's voice breaks.

Somewhere, Mother laughs.

Nick smiles, a crooked, widening smile.