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Hotspell (Artwork)

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HOTSPELL

by
Carla Thomas

Nothing was right about that summer. There was a kind of desperate madness about it. Sometimes, when Jeanine insisted on giving a midnight sermon on the advantages of her forthcoming civil marriage, I'd lie quietly on my bed and make listening sounds while strange voices competed with Jeanine's for my attention.

My days were structured and voiceless. I had two literature classes to fill the mornings and I worked afternoons for Melvin Morgan, CLU, insurance agent and financial advisor. Melvin was small, mustached, balding, and forty. He was always out making sales calls when I went in at 1:00, but evidence of his morning activities lay in five neatly marked stacks on my desk: conservation, APS, payments, claims, and miscellaneous. He always came rushing into the office at 4:55 in time to sign forms and ask me if I'd noticed how hot it was outside.