

April, Raymonde. — «While my mother sleeps». — Our mothers : portraits by 72 women photographers. — Directed by Viviane Esders. — New York : Stewart, Tabori & Chang, 1996. — P. 20-21. — Texte inédit en français : «Quand ma mère dort».

WHILE MY MOTHER SLEEPS

In my memories of childhood, there is a terrible dream: My mother, my grandmother, my two sisters, and I are reunited in the house just like every night, but the house is void of furniture and detached from its foundations. It is floating in the abyss. Leaning on the window sill, my sisters and I are looking outside. But outside, there are no more houses, no park next to the church, no more church, no more neighbors, no one. Only the waves of black water and leaded glaciers, in the twilight of the end of the world. And it is the end of the world, without any doubt. My grandmother is busy with something. My mother remains close to us. She seems as petite as I am. She is also looking, calmly, in silence.

My mother has always remained a girl. Her love of life is as great as her anxiety. On happily routine days, she loves to squint her eyes at the sun, cut material for a new dress and put the potatoes on the fire. During the days of the big departure to Florida, she gets up at dawn and goes out into the fresh air in a woolen jersey.

It does her good to speak to the girls, in secretive tones, of insignificant and harmless things. It happens, certain nights, that she can't sleep because she is thinking of the children.

My parents are in retirement. They sold their former house when it got to be too big and settled into an apartment. When I'm visiting them, and it's night and I'm not sleeping, I get up and tiptoe into the kitchen. In the darkness, guided only by the numbers on the electrical appliances, I'm alone in a very strange exile. I feel my mother's absence so strongly even though I know she's sleeping in her bedroom; she's only resting in the room next door. I, however, am awake. I'm not used to being awake while she's sleeping. My throat's in a knot, like in my dream.

RAYMONDE APRIL, MONTREAL, CANADA