

Senior Division, Short Fiction

Ida Linehan Young, Conception Bay South

NEVER (an excerpt)

The coat and cap hung on the nail, a sentry, undisturbed for one year less a day. Maybe undisturbed was the wrong word because a few times over the summer when the window sash was raised in the door and the warm breeze explored the house, the navy and white checkered fabric may have, on occasion, fluttered in anticipation of an outing.

Maybe ones like the excursions that had garnered its threadbare cotton, chafed beneath the arms from hours of tugging lines over the side of the skiff. Perhaps the one that had ripped a corner gash beneath the pocket after a run-in with a knot on the pared wood. The wound, later bound by Briggs and Little Tuffy ecru coloured yarn in an uneven cross-stitch, gave it character.

The turned-up tail that refused to flatten after the first wash remained as crinkled as the last time it was hung despite the pull of gravity on the hem for three-hundred and sixty-four days. Its blue quilted and knobby lining still hinted of salt sea air and turpentine from last year's spring var. It was a good coat. She sometimes thought of taking it down and pulling it on to bear witness to the novelty of her situation. To punctuate reality with her touch. To go forward to the unfamiliar. To let the scent fill the empty space, to stroke the fabric that he'd held and that held him unknowing of the minutes beyond when he'd give it over to the nail...