

Barry Dempster

Macabre:

The Edward Gorey House, Yarmouth Port, Cape Cod

“A is for Amy who trips on a crutch, B is for Barry who feels too much.”

Languishing on Edward Gorey’s Yarmouth Port couch,
a raccoon coat tucked around my cold ankles,
a coterie of ghostly cats doing their utmost
to look Egyptian. This is illness on a bristly
Thursday afternoon, immersed in the absurd, a house
full of beached stones and dead children. Am I in love
with death, or just deathly afraid, strange how I can’t tell
the difference. A skinny boy’s legs stick out
of a smothering carpet and we laugh ourselves silly.
A blonde fright wig of a girl crash landing on a steep
stairwell, *hardy har*. The broken man inside me
suddenly beside himself. Shivering, I clamor
to my feet and do the proper tour, the blood-stained
calendars, the grisly stuffed toys. While just outside,
a gaping mouthful of tombstones bleach the grass.
It’s almost nightmare, some dream boundary
crossed after too much dessert. Until slowly,
it all starts to feel normal, even my own hideousness,
a limit tipped upside down, all the terrors
spilling out. One more shudder and I’m hobbling
for the exit where the huge rare magnolia
is so real it’s almost fake. Is that the Eastham sea
I smell or just the scent of long life rotting?
A part of me will die today and I can’t stop giggling.