

PERKY EDGERTON

Procession, 2016
Oil on canvas, 37 x 43 in



HANK LAWSON

Summer Night

Tug-of-war starts at twilight. I finish quickly setting up the two card tables for their bridge party so Vern and I can get out of here in time. Maybe Venus is out there right now. At least when our parents have guests there's none of their fights that go off like bombs. Lately, Mom's been crying. Dad's not cracking jokes.

Their bombs are more real than those talked about on the news Mom's been listening to. The TV is on with that Korea stuff.

Dad's at the wet bar making drinks, something he likes to do, so everything's all right. I have to get his permission before we can leave.

"Ernie," Mom calls from the hall, "what snacks did you buy?"

"Nuts, assorted. To match our guests." Dad winks at me.

"Hush, Ernie," Mom says, coming into the living room. The doorbell chimes. "There!" Mom lowers her voice. "Now behave yourself. Remember, no pushing your Manhattans on Mert."

"Yes, dear." Dad winks again at me.

"And don't push them on yourself, Ernie."

"Yes, dear." Dad doesn't wink.

Mom opens the door. "Mert and Andy. Welcome, welcome. You're first."

Mrs. McKay says, "Well, we wanted to be first in line for Ernie's Manhattans."

Dad walks out with tinkling drinks for them. "I'm the Bringer of Jollity."

Mert sips. "Oh, nice." She dumps herself onto our striped sofa. "I could have used one of your world-champion Manhattans last night, Ernie."

"The fireworks at the park," her husband says.

"Oh, the noise was just horrific. It was this Korea business coming true. Just too much!" She sips again. "I'm going to throw back Ernie's Manhattan and have another at my side and forget about it. Does the TV have to be on?"

Before tonight, Mom would turn it off before guests arrived.

She says, "Don't you want to know what's going on?"

"What difference will it make?"

Dad says, "She won't watch anything else."

"Mert, we'll turn down the volume."