

1980

## Two Camelias in a Vase

Isabel Nathaniel

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### Recommended Citation

Nathaniel, Isabel. "Two Camelias in a Vase." *The Iowa Review* 11.4 (1980): 83-83. Web.  
Available at: <https://doi.org/10.17077/0021-065X.2656>

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Two Camelias in a Vase · Isabel Nathaniel

The scent is everywhere, a slow weight  
of sweetness. Languor at first  
that hangs in the quiet of this room.  
Now, soon, the sweetness is your own breath  
until you can imagine the heroines  
of Late Movies and Bette Davis  
sends the letter to Mr. Hammond.  
*I absolutely must see you,  
come at eleven.* Smooth white blooming  
in a crystal vase brought from England  
to Singapore. Bette Davis works her lace  
and waits. He's been her lover  
for years. The perfume in the room  
is a frenzy now. He prefers  
the Asian woman who powders her face  
to a mask and wears gold chains.  
The camelias go too far, deep curl  
of the petals, a drug of scent  
like making love. Later she lies  
about why she killed Mr. Hammond.  
She has fired six times in all.