

“Warren Pryor” –Alden Nowlan

When every pencil meant a sacrifice
his parents boarded him at school in town,
slaving to free him from the stony fields,
the meagre acreage that bore them down.

They blushed with pride when, at his graduation,
they watched him picking up the slender scroll,
his passport from the years of brutal toil
and lonely patience in a barren hole.

When he went in the Bank their cups ran over.
They marvelled how he wore a milk-white shirt
work days and jeans on Sundays. He was saved
from their thistle-strewn farm and its red dirt.

And he said nothing. Hard and serious
like a young bear inside his teller’s cage,
his axe-hewn hands upon the paper bills
aching with empty strength and throttled rage.

Because You Waited –Joan Bond

Because you waited at the dentist’s, reading magazines
While I was checked, x-rayed, cleaned
And given old toys and new toothbrush

Because you waited in the parked car, doing cross stitch
while I pointed, bent low, swayed high
in pink ballet shoes and black leotard

Because you waited at the library, flipping pages
while I re-wrote on foolscap the list of books
I had used in my research paper, but
had forgotten to record the exact footnotes

Because you waited in the study, watching midnight
movies
while I laughed, blushed, danced
and was given a new kiss and old poetry lines

I now can wait for you as you rock
in your single room with its crème curtains
Your face, a tapestry of intricate soft folds
your hair, a bluish cloud of August sky

I now can wait for you as you rise
leaning all your years on the shaky, wooden cane
and curl your bone-thin fingers over my hand
not knowing I need your hands far more than you need
mine

Departure – *Glen Kirkland*

leaving home
I stand with my dead
grandmother's suitcases in hand
coat slung carelessly over my shoulder
the car loaded down with
all my possessions
packed in boxes tied doubly
with string
(like a refugee from some old movie)

My father coughs
shakes my hand
and offers me a last-minute
yellow screwdriver with
interchangeable heads
my mother kisses me
and says
as long as I have a sense of
humour
I will
survive

in the doorway now
I smile awkwardly and mutter
goodbye
my mother asks
again
have you
got everything

yes
I say
I've got it
all
and
frightened suddenly
I want to paint my name
in huge red letters on the ceilings and walls
of every room
carve my initials in
the coffee table
and leave a life-sized reproduction of myself
asleep upstairs