

A WORLD OF HIGH STAIRS AND RAIN

After years of coloring it brunette, you've let your hair go a glacier's grayish white, your father's thin hair curling like loose winded snow on the lake ice. Your body has been squashed by half of your life, you walk it through the house, chair to kitchen sink, with crooked arthritic slowness, everyone who sees it visualizes easily the silent grinding of bones somewhere inside you. It may be hard to say so, but I'm not happy with the years you have left. You, however, have always trusted the afterlife, Christian and otherwise, and with Lazarus the thirteenth apostle, he who preached little but who walked from his tomb into sunlight crying like a new born from the womb, you've never placed much faith in the world as it is, a world of high stairs and rain. You've visited psychics looking for no more than a word from those dead you trust most, welcome, I guess, or rest. They'd fish around for private facts--someone close to you died after a long illness? cancer? no? something about the heart?--and nod, eyes closed, saying yes, your mother, sister, they're all waiting for you. You can be with them again. You half believe it all. As long as I've known, whatever age you are is too young for anyone to die. When someone does, you mention it in awe. You ask, What of. When you find out, your head shakes no, no, the tracks we follow can't just end in the desert. Can't we catch another train, one whose schedule takes us to the other sea? Can't we get off at this station, and stand with our bags at our feet? There are flower beds that need weeding from here to Wyoming. There is quiet to be uncovered, worms under shalestone. You're not moving westward. If this were about direction, you'd know better

how to sit yourself down, how many drinks to have.
As it is, you know as little as anyone
about what's taken you this far, three children, a drunk
husband, TV in winter, cheap novels in summer.
You've always looked upward, still. The clouds don't
seem to move. Your eyes are still sky blue.

20-Cornfield Review

Atkinson, Michael. "A World of High Stairs And Rain." *The Cornfield Review* 11 (1992): 19 - 20.
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