

# She Has Changed

July has injected a delirious torpor in me,  
Spinning off a drunken state of lassitude.  
What to do, where to go?  
In the throes of frozen energy Montessory Beach beckoned.  
Forty miles of drive was an easy bargain  
To unload my burdens, to thaw my stifled joy.

Montessory Beach is a full clean horizon  
Melting into a pulsating sapphire blue ocean,  
Fringed by a glimmering golden sand beach.  
The bosom of the surf is ample and its lust high.  
The sea birds garland the scene  
And the maverick breeze caresses  
In a frivolous yet searing romance.

I look around to see happy bodies lying on the beach,  
Urging the stressed minds to unwind,  
To salute the god of nature,  
To give all to the magnificence of the moment.  
This transportation to the other world  
Has created a nirvana-like state.

Looking at nature's frame around human life,  
I wonder if we can not get from life what we want  
Then how good is it?  
The potentials of life are greater than life itself.  
I want something because it is there,  
Let reason play its elegant games.  
We glorify life so much  
That it becomes a barrier to our fulfillments.

Intoxicated with my new upliftment  
I scanned the beach for the worldly elements.  
To my shocking surprise I saw Emily,  
Someone I knew twenty-five years ago,

Relaxedly lying scores of bodies away from me.  
My stunned senses had to work twice hard to confirm that.

Emily and I schooled in Columbia Engineering.  
She an organized, hard working student,  
I a dreamy world-disenchanted mind,  
Trying to find a foothold in the slippery universe.  
She knew what she wanted, I did not know where I was going.  
We lived planets apart  
But there was a mysterious magnetism pulling us together.

The sojourn at Columbia was nearing its end  
Yet we did not know what we should  
Make of our romantic friendship.  
I thought if we lived together for the rest of our lives,  
It would be a cool connection,  
Amorous and worldly-wise.  
But she was a creature of the world,  
I a follower of the spirit.  
There was no congruence of our universes.  
She did not understand our differences  
And thought I was selfish and lacked commitment.  
She wanted to stay but I did not know how.

Our parting was a tranquil mourning,  
Goodbye silent so long.  
After a momentary mechanical embrace  
We tore away and walked in our directions.  
But only after two minutes on our roads  
We stopped and turned around to see each other again,  
To feel the still smoldering fire between us,  
The echoing power of what might have been.

Emily's sudden appearance ignited  
The powder-keg of my memories,  
Momentarily disturbing my new-found serenity.  
Though we had broken physically  
I had maintained a spiritual connection with her:

She was not like me but she loved me.

Twenty-five years later

I saw an Emily more confident and poised than before.

Her ebullient beauty was intact,

Her elegant coiffure in place,

Though a little loose and gray.

But her manner was casual businesslike.

Gone were her mischievous banter and

Her faraway romantic drop-dead smile,

Care creases punctuated her now austere face.

And she treated me as an interesting old acquaintance.

Her half-contemptuous smile on my other-worldliness

Sneaked out of her usual social control.

She told me that after our breakup

She suffered more than two years of loneliness,

Rescued finally by her sense to survive.

She married a wealthy day-time trader and had two children.

She lives in middle class security and self-consciousness,

A regular churchgoer and a community activist,

And continues to work as an engineer.

I looked in her eyes and found a stranger,

Hanging precariously from the hoary cliffs of my past.

Our joint history had become a legend,

Love naturalized into benign fossilized crystals of memory.

Time had dilated our intimate space

And our universes had further drifted apart.

She wanted to know what I had done.

I did not know how to tell her that

I was still a dreamy drifter dancing on the outer

Edges of existence: a rolling stone incapable of gathering moss.

I was a loner who had ultimately found a tiny threshold

In the colossal emptiness of the universe.

I was a worldly failure living by the brilliance of the stars.

How could I tell her that I had not changed?

As it became unbearable to be with Emily any longer  
I tore myself from her in an abrupt, rude detachment.  
I half-ran across the beach to the parking lot,  
And drove home in wounded agitation,  
Grated by the thought that  
While I had maintained my platonic love for her,  
She had discarded me in the dustbin of the world  
As a miserable loser, an irredeemable lost soul.

But over time I found solace in the knowledge that  
Montessory Beach's hospitality  
Is eternal and without recrimination.