

Shutters

by Glenn Currier

From the road I can see the details of aging
on the old abandoned house,
its rickety closed shutters,
its boards bare and its shingles torn
by too many storms.

I walk up the fractured sidewalk
weeds sprouting from every crack.
I open the door
and immediately
I'm assaulted
by the heavy gray scent of old dust and mold.
In the quiet, a muddle of motes float
in a shaft of sunlight.

I wonder how many stories and memories
are hidden here
how many babies crawled its floors
how many meals were cooked and served
how many nights of making love
or caring for sick children.

In the silence I listen
for the sounds trapped in the timbers:
the arguments, the lullabies,
the children's laughter.

And on the far wall
thanks to that beam of light
I see a single frame hanging cockeyed.
I approach, and there in the middle of a scraggly wall
a green meadow, deer grazing,
birds in flight,
and in the foreground
a bumblebee on a bright purple thistle.

I turn and look toward the windows.
Outside the sun is shining
but inside it is cold and mostly dark.

I walk over and push open the shutters.
And only then, as I turn, I see
the children's heights marked on a side wall
the floor worn bare by decades of coming and going
the abrasion and dent on the wall
made by the back of a rocking chair.

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I wonder how I shutter my house,
block out the light
keep people from seeing what's inside:
the worn places
the cracks in the walls
the dark corners where I hide the unacceptable.

How do others shutter their houses
houses with rough exteriors
but hiding so much richness inside?

Maybe the next time I see an unappealing someone
I can take the trouble
to walk up the fractured path,
open the door,
and become
a shaft of sunlight
through the shutters.

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