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# *No air, no words, no more left*

*Peggy Alberbasky English 6*

## Everyone Screams

Everyone Screams.  
But you don't, you stop just before  
and with the thinness of sand.

The chaos that splinters  
from the dirt, wind and water waves  
rest against you as a tired dog.

You do not remain still.  
You say, the funerals are too near,  
too close to the horizon.  
It is coming, you say, it is virtue.

The names of things  
show themselves.  
Assemble next to you.  
It does not matter to you.

There is only unreason  
and you have all ready  
condemned those caps  
and coats. You allowed  
them to go quietly away.

**T**This is one of the poems she handed him. It is not a little thing. It is writing, writing that is lying before him. It is trying to tell him something, tell him something about creation. The birth that must come out of him. He feels she is trying to make him spin. She wants him out of her womb, the cottage she has made for his soul. She is making him become ripe. He is losing his eyes to the cries of

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women. To the cries of her. He is to give his flesh so she can take it up, carry it as paper and have the weight be that of a lead pencil.

Both of them are in the kitchen. She is cleaning up before she cooks the meal. She has given him three poems to read. He has rearranged the order and reads the last one first. She is washing, washing everything in the room. The room is being cleaned. The door has a corner that is clawed-scratched with a hole only as big as a half crown. It is funny, a funny little square area. He thinks he should get a piece of tin and nail and cover the shape. Make the door have a cluster. Her washing reminds him of the sea. All the broken and leaping water. The rocks that need to be climbed but, his feet always feel they are stepping on fragile shells. The shells feel permanent and he does not.

His heart is not beating, it is knocking against his chest. He looks at her face from the side. She is smiling as she stands. She brushes her hair to one side, he sees her body naked. She is as smooth as cream. She lifts her hands from the sink. He does not want to read anymore poetry, he wants to cross to her, to take her, to feel greater.

The kitchen is cooling. The evening is in the garden and walking in their house through the back door. She has not lost any of her beauty since she has decided to stay home, to stay home and create a home. Now she is looking more and more naked to him. She has never looked this naked. Before when she worked outside the home she looked layered. She always had something covering her; slippers on her bare feet, lavender dressing gowns to hide her graceful form. Now she has dignity without clothing. Her voice is clear, it is more crisp when she chooses to speak. Before her words did not move from her narrow path; now they roll over rocks and pebbles. Her words become as slender and illuminating as her poised fingers. She is always connected. He thinks this surely must be her new life. She has no twigs or dead branches to clear because early this spring she cleaned the backyard, the front yard and garden.

It is quiet, he notices, as he watches her stand and look at the dark. He sees her see the dimness leaning in the screened in porch. He finds it hard to remember or to believe that the kitchen has ever been this silent. He knows there is not a storm due. The evening is turning itself into hissing levers. Levers walking along a shore with their hands hanging at their sides, not connected to each other.

Her poetry makes him feel lonely. He never feels that he completely understands what she gives him but, he always gives her his same pattern. He tells her, her words are low. Her words make him feel that he does not need any of his limbs to walk. She is gesturing. She moves to the back of the chair. This movement of

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hers startles him because she never before approached anything from the back. It grates on him, it frightens him, it becomes a miss-spelled word. He needs her to come kiss him. To calm him, to push aside his fears, he needs her to clean the inside of him just as well as she cleans the outside of herself and him. They are so clean now. Before neither of them were ever very clean.

He notices when she speaks she uses the same words over and over. He thinks she does this so she can save her words and thoughts for her poems. He knows her poems require her at times to become mad about words. She keeps dictionaries, notebooks and her voice on tape locked tight in her strong box. She tells him her greatest and most worst fear is that one day someone will steal all her words. She waits for the one night she will go to her strong box and find everything gone. She tells him she believes she can only say words she can spell and pronounce. He decides that this must be why she does not talk much anymore. Before when she worked outside the home she talked all the time. She rustled with words, she was infectious, she breathed words instead of air. Now she seems more and more like a child.

Instead of dark circles under her eyes he notices she has long black columns. Her arms become wings of a sparrow. Her arms seem to be asking for something to fill them. He does not feel it is his body she wants or needs; he feels she needs her books, typewriter and words. When they sleep together she keeps a book next to her. She will only let him have one of her sides. He sees that she is losing the curve of her breast. He knows if he mentions this to her, her body will go straight and she will walk away to her writing room. She will go to her strong box and get out her tapes of her voice reading her poetry. She will play the words loud. He believes she is a devil woman. He believes she is a woman of wax. He realized a long time ago that she could never be warm. She would lose too much of what form she has left; if she became warm again. He remembers how she used to like the heat. But now she does not let him turn on the furnace unless there is snow covering the ground. She tells him to wear layers of clothing and she will not wear even one layer. He notices how much more she likes being cold and white. Even her cheeks come to be as hard as her fingernails.

Little, a very small slice

You say so little.

You say things so short.

You make me feel naked  
all the time.

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You make me not able  
to keep up with you.  
You are white.  
You are large.

Everything turns to minutes.  
My years with you are rotting,  
rotting fruit, late for the Harvest.  
Late for sleep. Late for the colors  
of the early morning.

You make my time short  
you make me miss the day  
you take my water  
and make it stirred terror.

This is the next poem he reads of hers. He likes it because it is short. He wonders why she capitalizes harvest, he decided it must be one of her usual typing errors. He hates the way she types. She does not care if she spells the words wrong. This inconsistency in her makes him mad. She makes him so mad. If she really felt that sentences were so important then why didn't she care, why didn't she open her eyes to the things she put down on paper? He did not understand. He did not remember seeing her up in the morning now. Before, she was usually up with the morning and having some small dialogue and coffee as if she was threading the sky. She would put her own embroidery on the morning sky. He notices her hair has fallen down again on the side of her face. Her face looks bony to him.

He does not want to talk to her about poetry. He wants to put a curtain around himself. He wants to try to shut her out. He wants to shut her out and keep her away as she has been doing to him. But what he really wants is to share, share her purpose instead of only talking mad things, of insane things of only her poems and words. She has nothing in her voice anymore. She tells him she puts it all in her poetry. He tries to think what word she will make him when she puts him directly in her work.

The kettle on the burner is screaming. It is making the china cup and saucer on the table shake and tremble; they look fragile and smooth. She keeps sweeping the floor, ignoring the steam. He feels she has made their house into a doll's house. Everything is miniature. She looks smaller and he feels bigger. Even the sofa he is sitting on feels tinier. His elbows take up more room. The corners and the edges of the room look more sharp. She looks dull. She

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does not have any oil left in her body, her pores are wide open. She is stripped.

It is night and the floor in the kitchen is clean. She makes the meal. She gets out almost every single pot and kettle from the cupboard. He does not mind because she is the one who will do the washing. He knows her ritual. She will use as many pots as she can and the left over ones she will fill with water and let them soak. Tonight she is making potatoe soup with lots of large chunks of peppers, carrots, potatoes, celery and onions -- he likes the onions the best. He likes them when they become sweet and soggy. Each time she makes this soup she tosses in a surprise. Tonight it is a red chili pepper. The pepper looks shrivled and burnt. It looks like nothing can save it from its dryness. But, its only purpose for being, for being here tonight in his kitchen is; it will be boiled in hot milk, cream and lots of pieces of butter. He loves to eat all the shapes she creates, he loves to eat pieces of things.

It is very dark. The blackness is growing healthy outside. There are no more half darks left. Before in their lives there had been rain storms, not anymore. Only fire and water remain. He is cold and he wants to be burning. To be so hot that he becomes wicked. He hears her take a deep breath. She must be cutting the onions. Before he used to watch her cut onions. Before she used to talk to him while slicing. She used to tell him that the more she talked to him the less time she had to cry. She holds her breath now when she cuts her onions. She tells him she can cut one whole white onion in three large lung breaths. He knows that this is how she measures things now, she does everything in breaths. She tells him she knows she has only a limited amount of breaths and she does not want to waste a single one. He knows how serious she is about this because every night before he goes to sleep she tells him how many breaths she took that day. How many breaths she took while he was gone. He wonders when she sleeps. She is always counting, she is always busy counting her breathing.

He decides to read her last poem. He does not want to because this poem was the one originally on top. He does not like the title. Tepee. He hates Indian things, he hates words that describe shapes, he hates things with sharp corners -- with edges so well defined. He likes cushions. He knows she thinks he is weak because he does not like to make his body suffer; to make his body bruise. He knows she thinks he is more womanly because he has the redness in his face and the thickness in his hips.

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## Tepee

Think whatever or however you like,  
you still smother me like a tepee.  
I am a deer and you stalk me,  
not noticing the violets you step on  
chasing me while you are trapping me.

I can hardly remember not being frightened.  
I am always as stiff as an ice-berg.

There must be reasons to match these rattles  
inside my body. I am always grimy, never clean enough,  
the extra weight I carry is surface dirt of yours.  
It floats to me, it sticks to me, it is woven in my fabric.

I once lived and I once was wise.  
Before I forgot everything that I failed  
I used to believe you belonged around me.  
Now you are just a heavy slab.

She hands him his hot bowl of soup pieces. She gives him crackers instead of bread. He hates crackers and he hates this poem. He lets the poems drop to the floor. She lets the soup fall in his lap.

She crowds herself in the corners of the kitchen. She plasters herself all over the room. There is no place for him to go. He feels his throat straining to yell. There are no words for him to say to her. She has taken all his words. She has taken all his sentences. She has left him nothing. She is all spread out and not breathing. He knows she is holding her breath because she will not even let him have her left over air.

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