

The Sound of My Mother's Hands

by Vic Huntington

The best sound in the world,
the safest,
most secure sound,
is the sound of my mother's feet and hands
closing down the house for the night.

I hear her from my room.
She closes the fireplace screens
she closes and locks the doors, tests them
she gathers used cups
and places them
with hands that once
were red with rash
from washing footprints
the white tiles marking
their pattern in her palms.

She straightens the cushions
on the oak rocker
where I remember her rocking me,
having run with aching ear to her,
seeking the warmth of her breast
to dull the pain,
my body fitting neatly into her lap,
the bow of the wooden legs touching
the floor.

She quiets the T.V.
I hear her footsteps being swallowed
as she crosses from tiled floors to carpet.
Silence follows her.
Lights click as she passes.

Now bills are stuffed
in my briefcase,
scratched with the years
after graduation
my responsibilities lie
by my purse,
keys to doors
a hundred miles away
that I lock,
doors locked out of necessity-
not habit.
I hear the cry
of a police siren
once a day.

Again, I hear the sound of my mother's hands,
and all the loneliness in the world
cannot come into the house
because my mother has sealed it.