

## I read a poem on Shampoo

“Come, let me wash (your hair),  
In this big tin basin,  
Battered and shiny like the moon.”

~ Elizabeth Bishop

The youth, when I had possession of *acres of time, celestial energy, and not you*, used to make me think that life must be lived in the Carpe Diem way. There is a perpetually leaking time from our metaphoric tank of life, and we have to wake up, do our business and bathe as many times as we can before it eventually runs out. The urgency of being with you often outplayed the intensity of thinking of you moments before your anticipated arrival. Now that I am old and write more poems than I read; have more grey hair in my beard than shooting stars in a heartbroken constellation; have more to remember than to dream, I think, we had at least four lifetimes to waste.

I could have let the milk boil that afternoon and not turned off the gas. Instead of saving a few more deterministic quanta of minutes, I could have heard insults from you, followed by an obedient cleaning of your stove, kitchen and a walk to the grocery store. You would have felt sorry for three ounces of extra yelling and waltzed off to the shop with me, reminding me yet again that it is okay to hold hands when people are watching. We could have taken the longer route and, in the end, not gone to the store and sat at the cemetery instead to pick the best-placed grave for our future dead bodies, right next to Elizabeth Bishop and some Grace L'orris. You would have pointed out that the guy had misspelt 'and' as 'anb' on the leftmost epitaph. But what a shame!

It makes my hypothesis even more apodeictic; things done in lieu of urgency work out well. I am not talking about my grad school assignments which I absolutely adore. *Love*. It takes so much patience to love. Even more to live with that love. It cannot be rushed, not when it has been done with, and you are looking to sweep out all the remains because they are pieces of a shattered glass which you step on every other hour. I am almost sixty and still tripping on the wine glass I spilt in my twenties.

But it does make me wonder, reading arbitrary unrhythmic Bishop poems, how nice it would have been to wash your grey hair in this age. At the very least, I might be permitted to clean the stains of the kisses I left one of our nights. Or the fingerprints and traces of the forgetful paths I made when I tried making you asleep by running my fingers on your scalp. There are one or two sexual anecdotes of things we did without care, involving your hair, but I feel it is best remembered and not recalled.

I live alone. I drink packaged drinking water. I sit in the grass and think I should start smoking. I promise I will light one cigarette maybe tomorrow evening. I have so much time to myself that I get even tired of thinking of you. We had time; we always do. Do we still do?