

# Fact of my life

*Linda Sillitoe*

My job was once threatened if I published a poem.  
I lived in another place  
but in America and knew my rights.  
I let the poem wait. Oh, I read it aloud once  
and silence swelled in the room like fog;  
then someone said, read it again.

My job was once threatened if I published a poem,  
a fact of my life I forgot,  
one my children don't know.  
A journalist, sworn to truth, nothing but,  
I wrote it at city desk  
unassigned to the story.

My job was once threatened if I published a poem  
for a public figure, no libel there,  
nothing false or obscene, only love  
and anger, dignity and crumbs.  
The second time I read it, silence rose  
and his relative, who questioned me later.

After I left my job I published the poem,  
then left the place and forgot  
the threat. Remembering, I ponder  
the knots lodged under my shoulder blades,  
asking if one truly can leave a place  
where poems hold such power.