

Sunday Morning—Eight Days Before Christmas, 2001

Suzanne Evertsen Lundquist

On death, I have thoughts
That bread and water
Can not satisfy:
Because they are gone
Jack, John, Eugene, and Ruth. . .

And soon my mother too
Will rest her gnarled body
Beneath the tree beside my father
And I will not see her again,
Nor try longer to break through

Her clouded mind and memory
To ask her how to clip roses
Or plant peas in the spring.
Gone the meals of corn, and yellow
Crook-necked squash

Creamed peas and new potatoes
Sliced tomatoes and peaches
From the vines and trees
Behind the home, now sold
Where she walked familiar and gathered in.

And dresses sewn and pressed
To make her daughters beautiful.
Hung memory-ready in her closets:
Wedding dresses and coats
Wool jackets and organdy skirts.

And all those lives she loved
And cared for:

Healing like few women can
The care-worn and unfortunate
Whose relief her society gave.

Grandma Sue and Dad
Both died encompassed by her
Ceaseless care; and now she
Can no longer walk or drive
The old Buick she won selling health.

I would hear her voice—long after
This morning's breakfast and tomorrow's lunch
Singing songs gathered in her voice
Forever tumbling from her eighty-seven years.
I would have her young, and here/hear, and never gone.

So speak to me of blood-red redemption
Male-ready and heavy talk.
I would have it simpler—the trimming of the tree
The oven-baked bread and fruit-room jam
And her, our mother, and him, our father: again.

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"Am I not a woman and a sister?"



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