

# Shutters

by Glenn Currier

From the road I can see the details of aging  
on the old abandoned house,  
its rickety closed shutters,  
its boards bare and its shingles torn  
by too many storms.

I walk up the fractured sidewalk  
weeds sprouting from every crack.  
I open the door  
and immediately  
I'm assaulted  
by the heavy gray scent of old dust and mold.  
In the quiet, a muddle of motes float  
in a shaft of sunlight.

I wonder how many stories and memories  
are hidden here  
how many babies crawled its floors  
how many meals were cooked and served  
how many nights of making love  
or caring for sick children.

In the silence I listen  
for the sounds trapped in the timbers:  
the arguments, the lullabies,  
the children's laughter.

And on the far wall  
thanks to that beam of light  
I see a single frame hanging cockeyed.  
I approach, and there in the middle of a scraggly wall  
a green meadow, deer grazing,  
birds in flight,  
and in the foreground  
a bumblebee on a bright purple thistle.

I turn and look toward the windows.  
Outside the sun is shining  
but inside it is cold and mostly dark.

I walk over and push open the shutters.  
And only then, as I turn, I see  
the children's heights marked on a side wall  
the floor worn bare by decades of coming and going  
the abrasion and dent on the wall  
made by the back of a rocking chair.

. . . . .

I wonder how I shutter my house,  
block out the light  
keep people from seeing what's inside:  
the worn places  
the cracks in the walls  
the dark corners where I hide the unacceptable.

How do others shutter their houses  
houses with rough exteriors  
but hiding so much richness inside?

Maybe the next time I see an unappealing someone  
I can take the trouble  
to walk up the fractured path,  
open the door,  
and become  
a shaft of sunlight  
through the shutters.

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