

Nine Muses Poetry, October 31, 2019

Stargazing

When she appears at my door—
the sister gone 60 years
to no place I could imagine—
she'll have come on business.
We'll join hands and go,
no one knowing where we're off to,
kind of like old times.

She left so suddenly.
Days on end I grieved at the loss
of a blue cats-eye marble I'd loaned her—
then found, blocking the hole that claimed her.
No one helped me roll it away—
until she did, pushing from the other side.

Before time soured,
August jumping straight to winter's cold shoulder,
we sucked ambrosia from fat honeycombs,
sun wreathing our heads,
life spreading like vast clover fields
from which the bees mined their gold.
How like honeycombs we believed the world—
there, just for the taking.

But the dead never leave home.
Returning from the wars, I find her
still belle of her paper doll galas,
the perfect hostess at tea.
She offers a dainty cup, asking
"So how have you been?"
Always the gallant soldier, I reply
"Oh, splendid. And you?"
"I'm fine," she says, "but look at you,
all wrinkled!"

If I could find a peddler of years,
I'd buy 60 of the retroactive kind,
climb the downward hill I'm on
and cash them in, the afternoon
of that night she left to swim—
instead pitching our blanket
to wait for the star I'd point to, saying
"For what seemed an eternity,
that one was you." Then home we'd stroll,
our parents happy in their dreams,
the stars like years we'd number to their end.