

For Ben on a Sunny Day

by **Sharon Frame Gay**

You're looking away from the camera, off to the side, head tilted back in laughter. A light breeze tosses your hair, curling it, the way it looked when you stepped off a sailboat. In this photograph, you are young. So young. Shoulders strong and straight, not yet weighted with the loss of expectation and the shadow of responsibility. Or the specter of mortality.

I remember your jacket, your plaid shirt, how they felt and how they smelled, like sea salt, coffee, and kindness. Soft from many washings, your shirt kept my head nestled near your ribs, the quiet thud of your heart a lullaby.

Somewhere in the distance, I imagine Emmy Lou singing, notes drawn out like wind chimes on an early autumn evening.

You dance behind the moon now. Quarter notes mingle with the songs of angels. And I miss you so.

I miss you on days like this, when the sky is so heartbreakingly blue that it seems anything is possible, and everything we could ever need is just moments away. The sky goes on forever, unfettered by clouds, straight up to the universe, offering those of us tethered to earth a glimpse of heaven.

If you were here, you might be on the greens. Or sailing before the sun on your way to a safe harbor, Orcas your escort as the boat slips through the waves, leaving a wake soft and billowing, like ancient silk. Perhaps the light



would find you in a blue ribbon stream, casting away from the shadows, or wandering the beach in the Low Country, Spanish Moss brushing your shoulders as you pass by.

When the rains come, and the world has slipped indoors, I am calmer, placated, safe and dry eyed, dreaming that you must be somewhere brighter. But when the sun comes out and summer shows once again, I feel the heart tugs, knowing how you would revel in this moment.

I want to give this day to you. Wrap it up in gentle, soft cloth that smells like home, tied with vines from the garden, leave it by my doorstep for you to find when you step down from the stars and walk through the night, smiling as you reach down to cradle it in your hands.

Sharon Frame Gay grew up a child of the highway, playing by the side of the road. Her work can be found in several anthologies, as well as *bioStories*, *Gravel Magazine*, *Fiction on the Web*, *Literally Stories*, *Halcyon Days*, *Fabula Argentea*, *Persimmon Tree*, *Write City*, *Literally Orphans*, *Indiana Voice Journal*, *Luna Luna*, and others. She is a Pushcart Prize nominee.