

Life of the Party

Category: Poems

written by Veneta Masson | October 29, 2010

Veneta Masson

By ones and twos
we drift up to the bedroom—
the women of the family—
leaving the men to mutter
and churn downstairs.
This is women's work,
choosing a burial outfit.
We have a list from the mortuary:
bring underthings
no shoes

Soberly we peer into the closet
slide open drawers
touch, handle, inhale.
Ah, I was with her when she bought this...
Remember the time?
What about a hat?
Oh yes, she loved hats!
No, not that! someone laughs.
Someone laughed!

We begin to try on, critique.
Soon the room is festooned
with strewn fashion.
We turn giddy, intimate
acquisitive—
a raucous sisterhood.

Next day some are subdued.
We got carried away...
Maybe it wasn't right...
And yet at the time—
in the moment—
and hadn't she been
the life of the party?

About the poet:

Veneta Masson is a nurse and poet living in Washington, DC.

About the poem:

"Who hasn't had the shocking experience of laughing in the face of tragedy?
At first it feels wrong wrong wrong. But what a gift it can be—giving us the

strength to gather ourselves and carry on. I'll never forget that evening in my sister's bedroom, the fragile hilarity that erupted and the doubts that arose the next day. This is the slice of life I've tried to portray in my poem."

Poetry editors:

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