

Minnie Remembers

Donna Swanson

"God,
My hands are old.
I've never said that out loud before
but they are.
I was so proud of them once.
They were soft
like the velvet smoothness of a firm, ripe
peach.
Now the softness is more like worn-out
sheets
or withered leaves.
When did these slender, graceful hands
become gnarled, shrunken claws?
When, God?
They lie in my lap,
naked reminders of this worn-out body
that has served me too well!

How long has it been since someone
touched me
Twenty years?
Twenty years I've been a window.
Respected.
Smiled at.
But never touched.
Never held so close that loneliness
was blotted out.

I remember how my mother used to hold
me,
God.
When I was hurt in spirit or flesh,
she would gather me close,
stroke my silky hair
and caress my back with her warm hands.
O God, I'm so lonely !

I remember the first boy who ever kissed
me.
We were both so new at that !
The taste of young lips and popcorn,
the feeling inside of mysteries to come.

I remember Hank and the babies.
How else can I remember them but
together ?
Out of the fumbling, awkward attempts of
new
lovers, came the babies.
And as they grew, so did our love.
And, God, Hank didn't seem to mind
if my body thickened and faded a little.
He still loved it. And touched it.

And we didn't mind if we were no longer
beautiful.
And the children hugged me a lot.
O God, I' so lonely !

God, why didn't we raise the kids to be silly
and affectionate as well as
dignified and proper?
You see, they do their duty.
They drive up in their fine cars;
they come to my room to pay their respects.
They chatter brightly, and reminisce.
But they don't touch me.
They call me "Mom" or "Mother"
or "Grandma".

Never Minnie.
My mother called me Minnie.