

Aunt Maude's Window

The radio chokes as I make the turn;
static replaces Pachelbel's *Canon in D*.
Seventeen miles to go
through dirt and gravel and reverie—
past frosty breath on windowpanes,
melted snow mixed with cocoa and sugar—
warmed by fire and love.

The kitchen window, with its homespun curtains
its pulley that squeaked,
sat open—summer and winter alike—
Fresh air never hurt a body, she said;
but it was more than that.
The window, with its tiny kerosene light,

lined with punched tin pie plates,
steam droplets beading on glass,
was a welcome life-sign on the mountain
when iridescent veils swallowed the valley.
Through the window
Aunt Maude felt the seasons change,
watched her children grow,
heard the tractor sputter,
fail the day her husband died

while the girl I was galloped through wildflowers—
panting, snorting, chasing rainbows
and bubbles of sunbeams and soap
hovering, then fading like childhood dreams.
Geraniums in bright green boxes
and old coffee tins bloomed
as the engine of life wound
past shutters never used.

Violins bolt from the radio
as the harvest moon looms before me.
Rows of cornstalks that once danced
to the music of a summer's afternoon
now stand like ghostly Roman sentries;
the field that waved welcome
now retreats to memory.

Icicles cling to the porch railing;
mildew and cobwebs have replaced flowers.
No lamplight beckons.