

Lights and Shadows

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Letitia

Henry Christenson

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She stood leaning
above the top of the rain-stained stairs
thinking, no doubt, of herself as some Shakespeare's Juliet
but looking more like one of the thousand street urchins
of shadow-and-lightness Seville.

She reminded me of a vanquished Janice Joplin:
the hollows of her eyes really morasses of defeat,
the times her brain dreamed of beautiful things
and awoke reluctantly to reality.

We watched each other as I walked from the street
and the sun played checkers on the green lawn
and when I stood beneath the stairs
she looked down like an unskilled courtesan
and whispered

hello

and I looked at her and answered

are you letitia

and she looked big-eyed behind her round sunglasses

yes

well, hello, letitia, i am glad to meet u

and letitia said then

who are you

and I walked away beneath her

me o i am sweet person

(continued-)

Letitia (continued-)

o sweet percy o sweet percy come here sweet percy
and my mind was filled with the grayness of the trees
and the blandness of the sky
and the fuchsias of life
and I sang over and over and over to myself
songs about sweet william

THE LAST TIME

The last time I was sad
Was not so long ago.
She told me what she did,
And so I let her go.
She told me something more--
That life is more than love--
Before she opened the door,
And left me lonely.