

Wire Fence with a Chain Link Gate

Nate Holman

A little plot of eternity
finitely enclosed by
a rusty, sagging wire fence,
plain all around
except for the front
that is scalloped on top
with simple elegance.

A sturdy gleaming chain-link
gate marks the always incongruity
of living and dying.

Brief little rows of monuments
stand guard
like sentinels of time,
some of them new,
sleek and low,
stonewalling death
with their solid freshness
claiming earthliness
for their post-modern tenants,
and not even sure of that.

Others-
Ancient, gray-streaked
ivory towers
reach upward
to the heavens,
pointing the way
to their Canaan's Land
found souls,
proclaiming a time
when such a thing
was believed.

Here lie Gants and Vances,
Clantons and Lovorns,
Dolittles and McPhails,
Gants married to Dolittles,
Lovorns married to Gants,
Vances and McPhails
married to
Gants and Dolittles
and Lovorns
and all of them
married to Clantons,
like a patchwork quilt
of marrying

breeding and dying

Some of them have been
sons of bitches
for a long time.
death hasn't changed that.
maybe one or two were
even saints.
but most were justfolks
trying to get along,
living and loving,
hating and hoping
cursing and crying
achieving and agonizing
regretting and rejoicing
being bastards
and being righteous
at the same time.

Holy ones
who sometimes acted
In unholy ways.

The tragedies are there:
the infant,
the young bride,
the husband who didn't
come back from war,
the two brothers
who drowned,
never got to know
the success or failure
of their dreams,
the feel of a woman,
or what it's like
to grow old
toward death.

And then there are triumphs:
the couple that stayed
devoted sixty-one years,
only separated by death
and life
for eleven months;
the ninety-three
year old woman
who outlived
three sicklier husbands,
none of whom she liked;
the parents who never
saw a child die;

the man whose family
loved him enough
to have inscribed-
“He was a good daddy.”

The men and women
who got their
chance at life
and succeeded
more than they failed;
Those who died
with more hope
than despair.

The rusty, sagging wire fence
with scallops on the front side
with the sturdy, gleaming
chain-link gate,
does what it is supposed to do-
It fences in
those who belong there
and fences out
those who don't.

Oh, those outside
may come
for brief visits and such,
But until
they come to stay,
the wire fence
gives notice
that living and dying
are two
separate things.

Still-
They're only separated
by a flimsy wire fence
with a sturdy gate
that both
opens and shuts
on a little plot
of Eternity.