



**7th ANNUAL  
POEM  
TOWN  
BRADFORD**

**The Summer When My Sister Ran Away**

She must have been about six,  
the youngest at the time,  
and we still didn't even have a television.  
So who knows where she picked up  
a phrase from some Western melodrama:  
"You done me wrong!"  
But the evening she felt victimized  
because our mother made her eat more beans,  
she declared, "I'm going to run away!  
You done me wrong!"

Pouting, she flounced out the door.  
We stood astonished and speechless  
as she marched down our front walk.  
She glanced back to see if we were watching,  
emphatically repeated, "You done me wrong!"  
and headed up the sidewalk.

Her urge to dramatize her plight  
propelled her past three neighbors' houses  
to the corner of our block, but no farther.  
Something else than drama  
made her put an arm around the streetlight  
and sway around the pole till she could see  
if we had followed to beg her to please return.  
We hadn't.

Twenty minutes later,  
As dusk began to fill the shadows  
between the houses, she slowly,  
slowly meandered homeward.  
No one even looked her way  
when the door opened and she scuffed in.  
I wonder if our disregard  
turned out far more difficult to swallow  
than three more bites of beans,  
a sense of less-than-worth-your-notice  
left unspoken for years and years  
of leaving and returning:  
"You done me wrong!"

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South Strafford, VT

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