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Almost Afraid

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Almost Afraid

She is almost afraid
as she walks across that cold floor
with eyes on her
staring, judging.

She only wants to sit
with legs crossed in the grass
and peel a tangerine
delicious and wet,
while singing softly
and off pitch
to only herself
and he,
who loves her regardless.

Tomorrow she will cry a lot
and incidentally say goodbye
to the one who saw her
dancing
naked
to an Aha song playing through a
very old radio.

And he will understand
and hold her
and want more
but won't take it
because she would.

She is not a mystery
and tonight, as always,
I let her be-
lying on the sofa,
 watching her,
bent over,
hair in face,
 hand in hair,
 reading
the book I lent her four months ago.

I smile
and take comfort
knowing she isn't looking.

The dress she wore today
(when she was almost afraid)
looked horrid on her
and hopelessly I loved her for it.

Randy Baker, '96