

# Four hearts and a vase of jonquils

*by* Mathew Paust

I wonder if they'll be there,  
Near the place where you gave up the ghost.  
I wonder as I drive the road you rode  
To where I know I'll find the rubber remnants  
Rubbed off tires locked by brakes  
Your squeezing hands applied in desperate  
Change of heart?

I wonder as I pass the place  
You likely entered from,  
From where your widow lives,  
From where she moved to  
When your hearts unclasped.  
I wonder how your final visit was,  
If separation's storm had waned  
For one of you, or gained new ire.  
I guess the latter.

My wondering gains velocity along the stretch,  
The final stretch from where you likely entered  
To where you must have seen the STOP sign growing large  
As you approached it in your deadly dash.  
I scan the road for skids of black to tell me  
Something more was going on,  
Some failure of machine to heed  
The man astride its virile engine,  
But no...  
Oh, wait! There's one...a small thin stretch of tire skid,  
Well short of the end, no STOP sign yet in sight.

Short, but long enough to imply  
Another violent death forestalled --  
A child's...a dog's...

No.  
More likely one last throttle goose,  
Acceleration burst, no  
Change of heart.

So now I near the spot where your life stopped,  
And wondering's back to what I'll find  
Besides the skid mark...there it is...  
It starts too late, too near the octagonal sign.  
No sign of of impact out there beyond,  
Where it happened.  
All cleaned up, everything.  
I stop and crane my neck,  
Strain eyes to find the yellow clump,  
The jonquils I'd seen yesterday,  
A luscious bunch ensconced in vase  
With a single forsythia sprig and one of white hemlock.  
I'd seen the mourner gather and arrange  
And leave with them for destination  
Undisclosed.

Ambivalence now resides within,  
You deserved the flowers, those flowers,  
I can't deny, hard as I try,  
Hard as it is to reconcile the betrayal,  
The terrible poignance of so intimate a gesture  
To another.  
That the widow received them in your stead  
Is a softer pain for me to bear  
On the surface.

