

# The Stop

by Philip F. Clark

You were busy, moving, alert in  
constant motion; packing  
books, clothes, paintings;  
deciding yes to this, no to that.

I was simply trying  
to settle somewhere in the space.

We'd known it for years when  
things were in place. Now, this  
abrupt interruption of leaving,  
preparing to make it empty,  
at least of you.

I heard the clock strike an unknown  
hour; heard the sounds in the street,  
and the neighbors fighting.

No words this time, nor the need.  
I watched you tape the boxes tight,  
saw you bending, sweating with the weight  
of exit.

I moved to the bedroom but could not  
stop inside, not wanting to see the bed  
unmade, stripped, as if, suddenly naked,  
no bodies had lain there. Nor would I  
look at the walls, and see the outlines  
where photographs once reminded  
us of places we'd been or wanted to go. Silly now,  
to simply think, 'What color should I choose?'

I tried to sit -- among all this mundane.  
But doing that would lead to thinking,  
which I did not want to do. What good  
was thought, or memory? Fragile  
as hands washing, or skin that has  
just been loved. I had to act, but

what would motion do? I sat  
and simply watched you.

At some point there was nothing;  
it had all been done. Fumbling for  
something to say, as the movers  
took everything away, we stood.

I think that we had never once  
held our eyes that long on each other.  
It felt like falling, walking, speaking,  
all at the same time; as in a film  
we'd seen before where we waited  
in vain for the punchline.

