

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.

