

Flower-Gathering

by Steven J. Kolbe

for Susan Michelle

I used to read this poem in my youth—ad naseum. The magnitude of what Frost was trying to say was lost on me, but the loveliness of how he said it was not. “Do you know me in the gloaming,” I would read and think, “What the heck's a *gloaming*?” I spent my time absorbing assonance, rhyme, dissecting meter while my more clever peers dissected frogs and pig hearts. And yet its meaning hurried on just ahead of me like a doe spooked by my footsteps.

I did not understand its meaning until college when I learned that Frost would take long walks—the inspiration for so many of his poems—and would leave his wife at home while he did. And just before he left, she would guilt-trip him just a little by walking a ways beside him: “to make me sad to go.” The poem opened up then with all its splendor.

It contributed—as many poems did—to my belief that poetry is larger, with its lyricism and sense that crashes upon you, than life could ever be.

That was then. But then today, picturing you at home without me, waiting for the first football game of the season, but also waiting for me while I'm waiting to come home to you, I can't help but realize how small Frost's words are. How feeble “the little while that I've been long away” is at actually describing the clock as it ticks slowly—ever so slowly—towards five.

