

My Big Sister



The little girl in the yellowed photo stood
With her wicker doll carriage at play
This is her long ago neighborhood
The shadows are long, it's late in the day

Behind the camera, unseen but felt
A common bond, our mother
For as parents we were dealt
The same roaring twenties lovers

That's Anne, my sister, as a child
When I was young, she was a wife and mother
Yet she was center of my world, for quite awhile
She led the way for me, and many others



To me she was a major beauty
With bobby sox and saddle shoes, so tall
Yet kind and tender in her duty
To her infant brother's squall

When I was two, she celebrated VE day
Time Square sailors she wished to charm
Instead of babysitting me. I think I may
Have caused her social life some harm

Perhaps the tickle torture was my fate
To pay the price of her displeasure,
I then was hit about my face
With my own hand, in ample measure

But all was really good and right
Her beau gave me a Piper Cub
This plane gave me my love of flight,
But it faired poorly in the tub

On a clear winter's day with fresh snow to my waist
Which was, at five, not very far above the ground,
She swooshed by on her skis, such grace,
While I tugged at my sled stuck in a mound

And then she left, "off to college" I was told,
Studying art at some place far away,
Unconsciously I mourned and was un-consoled
It was childhood's end, that day



I saw her between her work and play
She taught me to swim in the reservoir,
And I'm glad I didn't drown that day
I couldn't have continued very much more

She was changing. To New York she came
Working for the terrible Mr. Lyon
In the dog-eat-dog advertising game,
She's an art director! and still climbin'

Peter Law appeared with movie star chin cleft
I was most impressed since his car gave directions
With little signs that popped out right and left
Like mechanical erections

And then I heard they were to wed,
But first Anne wished a traveling career
Four months in Europe, it was said
I wondered if she'd reappear

So she shipped on the Italian Line,
Champagne, Bon Voyage and flowers,
She sailed to Barcelona, which was fine
But her favorite was the Paris towers

"Anne Paul" she thought a name too short
And wanted one whose length was more
The marriage plans were near about
"Anne Law" was shorter than before



But Art was first and last, it seems
After childhood equine love did wane
Her mother may have set the genes
Since she had felt the same

Graphic design was her great skill
Wood block and then silk screening
Colors and humor combined, at will
To make a statement with a meaning

But two dimensions were not enough
Flattened art gave way again
To plated steel and junk yard stuff
Glued by acetylene and oxygen

She never ignored the need to take up
Beautiful clothes and accessories with zeal
But her grinder applied the final makeup
To her fashion statements in cold steel

Art was her ego, her Ace of Spades.
Galleries and corporate gardens daily jaunt
She taught teachers the art trade
The art center was her haunt

And art was not just self-expression
She collected the works of many others
And allowed a special concession
If the subject was chickens or their mothers



Anne and Peter were not fools
And were therefore very attendant
To solve the shortage in the gene pools
Of Anglo-Scots descendants

I smoked my first cigar while still a lad
When Stephanie arrived in bunting and boot
I found that babies were not all bad
In spite of bottle feeding duties

Jenny was born, more diapers to exchange
She had the blondest hair
Then Hil-of-beans, all girls it's strange
At last, the Ant, an heir

Her motherhood meant many things
Making house a home for one,
Sorting out the hurts that life brings
And making sure that Christmas is done

The carriage barn, it grew and grew
A major theme of Anne's whole heart
And soul is Jacob Street, the number two,
Turned into gallery of art

Behind the house there lies her joy and pride
A garden with intensive beds that few can match
What wonders that horse manure can devise
And compost in abundance from table scraps



The tomatoes spring forth without compare
If only slugs and other pests made fat
Would keep their distance and the vegetables spare
Damn, those pesky tree rats

And it's not just vegetables that grow
Also flowers in all shades and size
Bring gladness to garden below
And beautify the house inside

Anne does not just focus on her brood
But has friends far and wide who are dear
Here there must be something good
Since they are the same friends year after year

She is a tower of strength, a good source of hope
To all that know her, both family and friends
She is the person you go to when you can't cope
To sort out life's disappointing ends

Her goal it seems to live the healthy way
Ninety years a minimum
For this she plays three sets a day
And eats a lot of vitamins

Holistic Life is more than a phrase
It's a sincere life style
Spare us the caustic poisons of the modern phase
And keep running mile after mile



Competitive? The urge is much too strong
To win, it's always feast not famine
"No holds barred" is never wrong
When playing Scrabble or backgammon

Food, ah food, none can match the zeal
(Save Paul Prudhomme or Julia Child)
Of Anne who really crafts a meal
That makes your tears run wild?

Well-read and versed, she has the smarts
Such that on any subject she will soon
Offer an anecdote that always starts
"Years ago, in a New Yorker cartoon..."

In our father's graves there is much remorse
Since she has strayed the Republican path
She's more than slightly to the left of course
Risking the force of posthumous wrath

What now? The big "Seven Oh" has come
Keep popping those vitamins, we all love you,
And don't forget the daily run
You're making Thanksgiving dinner
..... in twenty thirty two!

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