

Poetry Series

Margaret Hasse
- poems -

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Margaret Hasse()

Margaret Hasse, originally from South Dakota, makes her home in Saint Paul, Minnesota. She was educated at Stanford University and the University of Minnesota. She has a new collection of poems, *Milk and Tides*, recently released from Nodin Press. Her two previous books of poems are *Stars Above, Stars Below* from New Rivers Press, winner of the Minnesota Voices competition, and *In a Sheep's Eye, Darling*, Milkweed Editions, winner of the Lakes and Prairies competition and a finalist for a Minnesota Book Award. Margaret has received fellowships from the National Endowment for the Arts, Minnesota State Arts Board, and the Jerome Foundation, as well as two fellowships from the McKnight Foundation through the Loft Literary Center. Recent anthologies that include her work are *To Sing Along the Way: Minnesota Women Poets from Pre-territorial Days to the Present* (New Rivers Press, 2006) and *Where One Voice Ends Another Begins: 150 Years of Minnesota Poetry* (Minnesota Historical Society Press, 2007) .

First Day Of Kindergarten

Bus steps are too high, but William clammers up gamely.
Doors shut. He peers out a print-marked window.
From the street corner, I wave like a soldier's bride
as his bus turns a corner and pulls away.

At noon, the yellow bus returns him to the same place
where I'm standing again.

He thinks I stayed, waiting in his absence.
When he finds out I played tennis all morning,

his forehead crumples like paper in a wastebasket.
Now he knows I can move on my own without him,
tears drawn from the well of desertion form in his eyes.
I'm his first love, and his greatest disappointment.

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Going On Alone In The Great Conversation

Mother, you used to say that old was
just going on, no special feeling,
except of surprise.
You said that dead was
a great conversation continued.
With the stars? I wondered.
With the living? With dreamers taken up
in sex or death?

Mother, the last time I saw you was last night
though you have been dead thirty years.
Like fire in a paper, your face flamed,
each line and hair, both lips and hands
coveted in their sweet perfection.
Your only fault: you didn't stay
long enough. I want to talk with you.
With luck, your hands would pet my hair
that can never be touched enough.
With time, I could have smelled your smell,
yellow perfume, the dry flower of makeup.
Instead, after a glimpse of you, I was
like a child on the green grass
in the sputter of tulips, the parent departing
in the big black car.
I cry after it: Come back.
Take me with you. Me go along.
Me go on alone.

Much later when I am seventy,
your age when you died, old mother,
I'll be your twin widow in the mirror.
We will both be wearing lavender,
absurd Easter hats and smiles because
we've faith in what's new and what is given.
Because we loved reading out loud,
the words, each one a new penny dropped in a jar.
Because we have kneeled at each other's sick beds
and you passed on the little secret notes
and gene codes, these bow legs from you,

these valentine eyes, this sentimental breathing.
Because we are each a word
in a great conversation,
and the word is good.

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