She looks down and nods. "I'm gonna go to the bathroom."
"Okay."
She gets up and I watch her walk towards the back of the café. I walk up to the counter and wait for the staff to notice me. They're always too busy moving dishes around, talking to each other. Sometimes I feel like they don't like me, but I know I'm taking their indifference too personally.

"Sorry, we're out of Hazelnut Cream. I'm going to brew another."
"French Roast is fine."
She slides the cup over without eye contact.
"Thanks."
I don't know why I drink so much coffee. It does give me a slight sensation of being more "aware," but it always gives me gut-rot and cotton mouth. It's so hot out today. Why we ordered coffee, instead of something cool, makes no sense. We do get one free refill.

I sit back down in the booth. There's not many people in here today. A boy and his father are sitting in the booth across the room from me. Neither one is saying anything, and the boy catches my stare. I bring it back to my cup of coffee and watch the steam lift off the surface and disappear. I can feel my face starting to perspire so I sit back. My armpits are soaked. I start flipping through the stack of magazines that lay on the table. So much crap. Why does she love me? I've always tried to tell her how I feel about her, or have I? She must know I need her. I know I've told her that.

I remember telling her how important it was to me that we helped each other grow, on all dimensions; how I hated the idea of being stagnant and habitual. I know we've grown. Two and a half years now. She looks like my mom, in pictures when mom was younger. The long brown hair, reddened by the sun, the oval face, so innocent and yearning to love and be loved. I can't imagine her hardened, as the years have hardened my mom.

The lock doesn't work. So I rush, my back to the wall, my eyes fixed on the door as I unbutton my jeans and slip them down my legs in one swift movement. It is much too hot for jeans, but self-consciousness comes before practicality.

Sometimes I think he's all too aware of me. He knows me too well, mannerisms, fears, everything. He can probably even tell when I'm trying to block his vision, cloud his eyes from my insides and become opaque. When he looks at me I try so hard to appear at ease.

I like the picture on the walls. I like the colors, moving, circling me, colliding with my vision, creating brilliant, living visions. Rhythms that rock through me. I believe in them.

My jeans buttoned, hands washed and still wet. I pull open the door and walk slowly to our table and meet his eyes. "What are you thinking? What's on your mind."

The Cursed Blessing of a Poetic Soul

Mary Fisher

A poet is one
Who doesn't know enough
To come in out of the rain.
So, instead I stand still
And let it flow under my skin
Soaking into my soul
Until I can hold no more.

A poet is one
Plagued by
An eminent distractibility.
So, if leaves outside the window
Fall like snow in autumn
Or the light beneath the shade
Makes patterns on the floor.
My eyes gravitate
And my mind drifts away
From Algebra or Kafka
Or whatever I'm supposed
To be learning.

A poet is one
Who sees momentousness
In minor matters.
So, I stare at objects
Overlooked by others
And laugh at private jokes
No one else
Can understand.

Is this poetic soul
Bestowed on me
The vilest curse
Or greatest blessing
That man can receive?