American Life in Poetry: Column 350

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The persons we are when we are young are probably buried somewhere within us when we’ve grown old. Denise Low, who was the Kansas poet laureate, takes a look at a younger version of herself in this telling poem.

Two Gates

I look through glass and see a young woman of twenty, washing dishes, and the window turns into a painting. She is myself thirty years ago. She holds the same blue bowls and brass teapot I still own. I see her outline against lamplight; she knows only her side of the pane. The porch where I stand is empty. Sunlight fades. I hear water run in the sink as she lowers her head, blind to the future. She does not imagine I exist.

I step forward for a better look and she dissolves into lumber and paint. A gate I passed through to the next life loses shape. Once more I stand squared into the present, among maple trees and scissor-tailed birds, in a garden, almost a mother to that faint, distant woman.