

**First Place Winner, 2009**

**When They Leave**

They always say it hurts them more to leave  
Than it hurts you to have to stay behind.  
But they forget the way the hours grind  
You down when you wait for their knock and grieve  
In silence. They forget how they bereave  
You of their clanking fork when nights now find  
You eating alone. And they forget how, blind  
To time, you track the rain from morning to eve.

But they leave just the same, and you remain,  
Ears ringing, as the door tolls like a gong  
Behind them. You hide tears from friends and feign  
A smile when life thrusts you out among  
The living. There, in solitary pain,  
You crouch, a black dot in a brilliant throng.

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