

ANNE ACCO

Elizabeth

Elizabeth,  
Never the short always, Elizabeth.  
My aunt she was,  
My mother's youngest sister.  
She taught me how "to read"  
The comics before I learned words.  
As she babysat the lot of us  
My teenage rebellion lasted one day.  
She told me to read more  
Before I acted out the rising tide of anger.  
One fall day I shared a laugh  
With her about a twist of fate.  
Life's best moments can visit  
On expectation grandiose and rosy.  
It started with a call for Elizabeth  
A blind date, he would call back himself.  
To state the time, the place, the means,  
To go for an evening of great charm.  
And wit,

The blind date had a voice like Orson Welles.  
"Oh my" we all cooed, cowed  
By her stroke of luck among these rocks of gold.  
She sighed he sounds handsome and intelligent,  
We stopped hearing at handsome.  
The hair was done twice, I watched,  
The makeup applied by pale, slender, pretty hands.  
The black hair, a queen couldn't buy  
Done with great care, a face with black eyes.  
So intelligent was the mind,  
The eyes were brighter, quicker and clearer.  
Elizabeth spoke English in accents,  
I never heard among our people.  
It was crisp, it wasn't foggy England,  
Rather the woolywisps of the Isle of Lewis.  
Yet when she spoke our language,  
The accent disappeared and we were all okay.  
Just like Orson Welles, I said,  
She said, 'like tall, dark and handsome.'  
The hour came, the moment arrived,  
Someone came to the door, a tall fellow, I said.  
Elizabeth pushed me aside putting on her  
Great knock'em dead smile.  
Orson opened with "Good evening,  
I'm here to meet Elizabeth McKenzie."  
Elizabeth didn't miss a beat,  
She asked him in, introduced him to our stares.  
We watched them leave,  
He was courtly, they didn't stop talking.

Aunt Kate sighed, I looked her way,  
She volunteered her thoughts.  
I want to cry sometimes  
I remember when we took her to the doctor,  
He took my hand,  
He said that lump in the child's spine,  
Is the start of a twisted and broken back.  
Dad gasped, he had just lost his second wife,  
Our brother Donald was already sick, sis, Lily was  
gone.  
Elizabeth seemed so healthy,  
So much her mother's child, his last love.  
The hair, eyes so black, the white skin,  
The long limbs, the start of a fine long torso.  
Elizabeth spent thirteen years in and out body casts,  
Her spine became tubercular and horribly twisted.  
I wanted to be sad, I couldn't  
Froth up the emotion, I waited.  
Elizabeth came home happy, chatting,  
Right up to the door, they came in.  
Orson was over six feet tall,  
Legs like spindles for fine thread.  
Pushed into tight blue jeans — cowboy.  
Boots, sheepskin jacket, all cowboy.  
Written all over his lean outdoor face,  
Eyes blue as Elizabeth's were black.  
His voice was melodious, a perfect baritone.  
I didn't laugh. He left forever.  
Elizabeth stayed only some months at any time,  
In my life, each episode became memorable.  
Her life was a walking lesson,  
In fortitude, intelligence and logic.  
Placed ahead, great plans completed,  
Elizabeth never really looked back.  
At the last I heard her voice on tape,  
Sent from New Zealand, already the death rattle in  
her sigh.  
Her voice was like silver and gold.  
It had become better with time.  
Elizabeth did stay long enough to teach me the  
comics,  
To warm my soul, to bend but not to break, her  
motto.  
She gave us her gift to read the funny side,  
Of the pathos in our lives if we looked hard enough.  
And that was Elizabeth.  
My mother's youngest sister.