

## Linda Holeman

### How We Waited for the Test Results

Here's how we waited,  
that warm autumn day on  
Vancouver Island:  
me on the balcony  
tea gone tepid in my cup  
glimpsing the ocean tilt close  
and then away  
listening for the phone while  
baskets of dying lobelia  
spun in weary circles  
whispering dry apologies.  
Overhead, rooks left the scene of the crime  
with wings like  
hands  
digging through a bag  
of velvet memories  
and you,  
inside,  
wrapped in your twisted sheets and dreams  
smiling  
as you flew away  
in the scent  
of sea  
blue drone of wasps  
smiling  
as we waited.

### Ode to a Shell

(for Luba and Lillian)

It sits alone in the light of a west window.

Perhaps once it was called chambred nautilus, perhaps channeled whelk, perhaps some other name that hinted at purpose, or dignity. But no one bothers to call it by name. It has become generic shell.

Far from its birthplace, shell still holds the lightest scent of salt, still murmurs the weakest echo of a hollow wave. Perhaps it dreams of days of passion, of writhing, twisting, sinking and resurfacing as it was filled and emptied, time after time, year after year. Perhaps it remembers its former shape of sharp points and clear edges, before it was ground by hard knuckles of stone and grains of sand sharp as glass. Perhaps it dreams of the small lives that briefly found shelter in its welcoming cochlea, and then moved on, leaving only the silvery, dried traces of afterbirth.

Or perhaps it doesn't dream at all, but waits, waits for the last ray of sun, for that one moment at the end of each day when its inner self of palest peach will pick up the glow of the dying sun. Waits for the moment when its one small vanity-iridescence-like fish scale, like prism, like opal

will be visible  
to any  
who  
choose to look.