

[Home](#)

[Spring 2006](#)

[Winter 2006](#)

[Autumn 2005](#)

[Summer 2005](#)

[Spring 2005](#)

[Autumn/Winter  
2005](#)

[Summer 2004](#)

[Winter 2004](#)

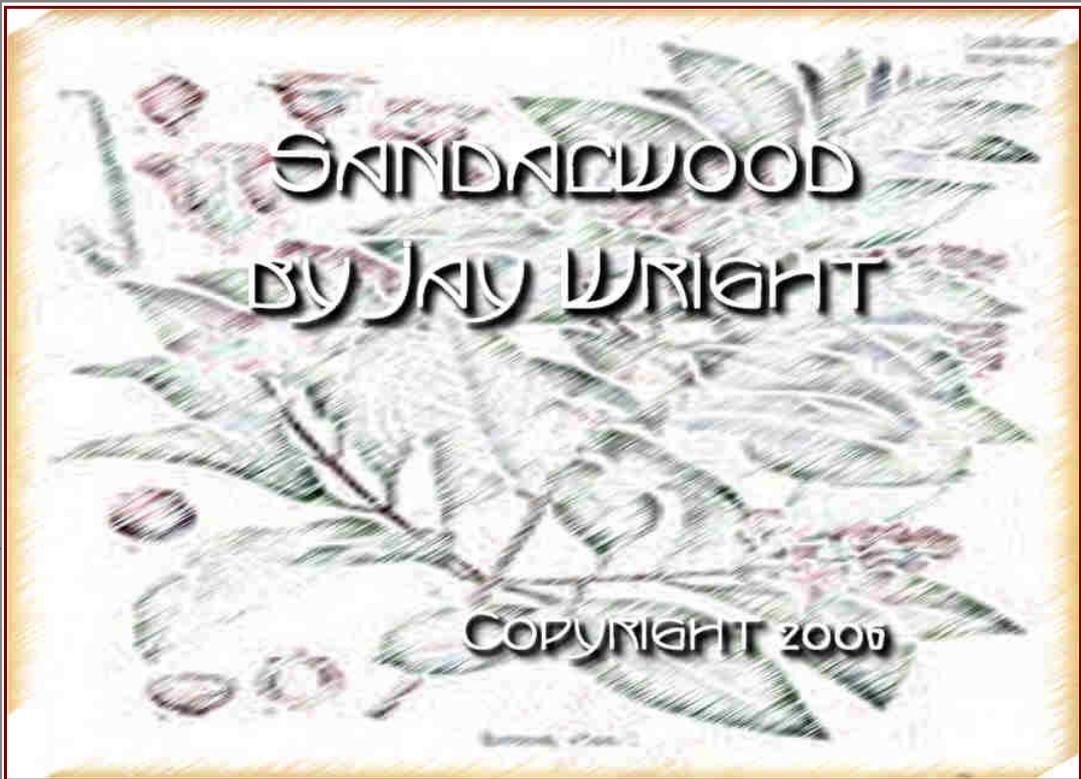
[Summer 2003](#)

[Editor's Note](#)

[Guidelines](#)

[SNR's Writers](#)

[Mail](#)



His base smell of sandalwood. (Ticking frozen sunlight.)

The rest of it, breathing so fast now, scent of it in the freezing air. Oil of Bergamot. Coriander.

From where?

(The blossoms of the shop frozen in mid-sway and the blue Mediterranean light.)

What else? A bit of lemon. And something dusky, earthy, foresty. Molecules still contacting her receptors, body and brain working in concert despite the frozen time registering these simple scents while the other superfluous grindings have faded away.

Oh, yeah - the sunlight has a papery smell all it's own.

The street staccato and shrill now at rest. A parade rest, okay, but resting none the less, she feels almost like she's being watched by the stick-like figures. Models in shop windows. Window dressings for her life all they've ever been, it's true, but now with all this honesty it seems creepy eerie, she feels like she's been living in her own head. It feels like she's asleep in her bed, morning piercing through before she really becomes aware. The softness and the nuzzle down deeper feeling. The rules of physics, of her life are off today. Right now things are both working and not. Time has left the building. She's half-asleep and strangely happy about it.

What kind of shop in this stillness?

He's turning to look at her. Everyone else sleeping with their eyes open. But not him.

What kind of shop? A coffee shop? Something quaint?

A flower shop.

One she hates, actually.

One where the employees are rude, the flowers die in a day or two.

He has finished the craning of neck. Stopped dead center on her face. He looks at her through the haze going cold.

"You seeing this too?"

"Huh? Um. Yes."

"What is it, do you think?"

"I... I don't know."

"Yeah. Me neither."

The way the flowers should be swaying gently, early breeze and sunshine. Instead, cold setting in.

"You smell great. No offense," he says, smiling and sure she's going to balk at that.

"No... it's okay. There seems like. Is this. Do you have any idea what's going on here? Noticedyouimmediatelythesameway," she finishes running it all together.

He nods. "Something going on in the atmosphere. Like we're animals again, huh? Whew. Well, at least it turned off the heat. Was going to be a real scorcher." He says it like it's required.

"How long until we hit absolute zero though?" She's looking skyward and pretending along with him.

"Hadn't thought of that."

"Mmm."

"What?" he asks, looking at her again, he noticed her non-committal response, which most people never do. Now he's suspicious,

She arches her back, fight or flee, ?Nothing - you didn't pretend to know. Like this sort of thing happens to you every day." She smiles a weak smile.

"Oh. That."

She continues with the weak facial muscle twitchings hoping for the best. Hoping the moment will break, that normalcy will resume, that her faith, her shy little life will wander away from this pointed knife-edged dot of a moment.

"Almost frosty now."

She nods, realizing how far she's venturing from herself, her normal ways.

"My name is Doc." He extends a hand.

"Oh." She shakes his hand politely, but somehow refusing him subtly. "I'm Bird."

"See" We have something in common already."

"What's that?" she asks, confused.

"We both have people always asking us how we got our names."

She nods over-vigorously, examining the day from the far edges of her eyes. She's looking for escape and looking for some respite somewhere quiet with him where this won't end. "Always."

The time syrupy and honeyed out, sipping on it " he's leaning towards her. Enjoying it, she's pretty fairly sure.

She asks, "Hey. Do you think it'll stop?"

"Like a solar eclipse or something?"

"Yeah. Kinda."

He shrugs and looks skyward at the now hung up sun, gauging.

Coffee from down the street hung in the air like a ribbon. Molecules and osmosis. Stuff interplay. Her life hasn't been very good so far, has it? She ought to, she ought to? No. Stop it. Quit saying what ought to happen because it never really works out and then there's the feeling afterwards where something was coming but then didn't and why all the disappointment when things were mediocre but not bad, at least not bad enough to notice and? (You're doing it again.) Just don't make it any worse. The wanting. All that pent up desire and agitation.

"Huh." He sits down on the curb.

Then try. Try one more time, after all these other times didn't work and why not, things have kind of come to a stand-still today, it could go on like this forever, entropy and the universe sort of out of breath, hands on knees shaking it off, getting ready for the cool down portion of the program. Life feels so heavy to her sometimes. Try it, come on, he looks harmless enough.

Just try.

Once more.

"Doc, I'm scared."

"Yeah, me too." He looks up at her from where he's sitting. He sat down on the sidewalk. When did he do that" He"s sitting on the gritty peeling away paint of the parking stripe. He seems decent enough, harmless enough sitting there. He starts to say something, "Um." And doesn't.

That was going for broke. Maybe you've scared him off, although in theory it looks like it's not going to matter for much longer.

He looks up again after scanning the street. "You can join me. Sit here and we can

talk until, you know, whatever. Or maybe things get better."

She sits on the cold painted concrete, line of chipped color and oil smudges, blackly infiltrating her lungs.

"Well, Doc, you got a girlfriend?"

He laughs. "Nope. You?"

Bird laughs right back. "No."

"That's good."

"Yeah. I guess so. " She looks sideways at his hands ostentatiously. "Not married either looks like."

"No. You?"

"Never."

"Never get married?"

"I don't know. Never been married."

"I see." Again scanning the street. Wanting to get away from her? Nervous tick? The situation of time being balled up, in need of being kicked over, kicked into something new.

"And it seemed like my life was going so well." She says it wistfully in her head but it has a bitter taste.

"Mmm," says Doc.

"I'm sorry, maybe you don't need to hear about?" She can't finish it.

He waits and the silence stabs her a little bit as it carries forward. Finally he answers, "No, I don't mind hearing."

"Oh." She can't find anything else now, which is sort of sad or silly or, "It's okay. And I'm not saying that because I'm mad."

"I know."

"You seem sad,, Doc."

"Like any other accident--look at everyone, cut off."

She does look. She scans the street like he has and sees it all, but it all seems like cardboard cutouts, or maybe it's shock or the feeling of going inside herself from the cold.

"You live deeper inside when the cold comes."

He nods.

"You're crying aren't you?"

"No. It's just the cold."

"You seem sad."

"I am, Bird, I am."

"Why?" Can she? Does she dare? She slides her arm around his waist and leans into him, breast hip flex ribs muscle breath.

"I lost someone close to me. Someone and now? I want them here even though this."

"Someone you loved, "and she feels like disengaging but can't.

"Yes." He draws a shuffling breath. "Just friends, just myself. Just a different time and place. I'm all alone now is all. I miss me and them and everything when there was possibility."

"There isn't any? Even if this stops?"

"No."

"Oh." She puts her head on his shoulder and reaches up to pet his hair.

"I'm scared too, Doc."

"I know."

She wants to tell him everything even though he's in his own little world, she wants him to be happy. She wants to be needed. Doesn't she? So why? (You're doing it again.)

"I," but she stops, while the scene glibly continues to not continue.

"You seem in a worse state than me," he turns to her nestled into him in the cold. "God, it feels so sharp, it's like it could snow, I've never seen that here. Not that the weather has anything to do with it. You seem like you really need someone."

She can only nod. She breathes in the papery smell and his combining, "I live right there." And she nudges into him.

He looks upward, across the street. "There?"

She nods again.

"Do you have anything warm to drink?"

"Tea?"

"Great," but he says it softly, directed right at her, and she loves it.

Afterwards, there was no where to go really, or any reason to go there. They talked a long time in the sun, they conjectured about how long it had been. The clocks all

followed the sun on vacation.

"Laziness, that's what it is," he said. The sun snoozed out the new eternal day, it's light and warmth fading.

"Entropy?" she conjectured.

He could only shrug.

(After a long while, love.)

The ball of energy starts somewhere just behind her spine, close to her pelvis. Ripples spreading upward, stomach to flushing chest and face. Her hair hangs loose, framing him under her. It's not that she's never done this, But she's never felt at home with it. Never let go. As it takes over her body a small space in her head opens and blanks the rest of her. A little chest hair, a flat stomach, defined but not the sort of guy who works--worked " at a job where he had to go to a gym to make sure he stayed in a certain shape. Not muscle bound. Barely sweating. He's beautiful.

She's leaning down on him from a straddle, chest to chest, different rates of breathing coming together, and she's not worried about that, worried about what he thinks.

She never even thought to ask what he does. Why bother now?

(Time, the funny thing. Feeling safe. A funnier thing. Love? Funniest of all.)

"Wow, that was great, Bird," he says a little too loud. It sounds deafening against their new environment. No street noise, no planes. What about the planes? she wonders. Are they just strung up there, suspended forever? The only thing that's given either of them pause is that the lights still work, her gas stove top worked. They touched the glass of her kitchen window after tea, and it felt like ice. Surrounded by every wool blanket she has. She couldn't decide if she should turn on the heat. Would it work? Would it work and then stop working? What would a fire be like? Some terrible sucking thing taking all the heat away from them?

"Did you?" she thinks to ask.

He laughs. Nods into her mussy hair.

"Er? Sorry. I was, um, busy."

"It's always the quiet ones."

She laughs and slaps him playfully on the chest.

The sun still deafening and cold.

Eventually their breathing cycles refined, matching the other's tenor. They sleep in the cold light.

Safe. Finally. Frost covered summer panes.

Awaken now.

Awaken to the sounds of traffic and the street. Awaken to the sounds of another's breathing and the safety of home. Awaken to a world slightly changed but the same. Awaken to an internal dialogue and an external one. Awaken to a lack solipsism. Awaken to a partner and love and light with warmth. Awaken to morning yellow kitchens and green leafy waves in the distance riding balmy breezes, awaken to the sixty cycle hum and the news coming in from all over the world. Yes, all over the world.

Awaken to fear and change. Awaken to the need for body work and long hard looks at sophistry. Awaken to a fear of being discovered and of discovering someone else. And it's not so bad after all. Awaken to his eyes next to yours and feel depth and need and a future.

(Now.)

**Jay Wright's** work has been included in the Biennial of Poetry and Video at Museo de Nacional in Mexico City, and he has read at City Lights Bookstore in San Francisco. His most recent stories have been published by *Left Curve: Oakland's Yearly Arts and Politics Journal* and *The Paumanok Review*, which is run by Wind River Press. Other published work has been included in *Cherry Bleeds*, *Curve*, *Duct Tape Press*, and *Alternate Realities*.

**Copyright 2006, Jay Wright.** This work is protected under the U.S. copyright laws. It may not be reproduced, reprinted, reused, or altered without the expressed written permission of the author.