

A Front Porch in Pikeville

by [Colleen S. Harris](#) (April 2025)



Sunlight over the Hills (Emil Kosa, Jr., 20th C)

A Front Porch in Pikeville, Circa 1998

for Jason

I stepped out onto a porch with a snoring hound
and a wide swing the breadth of my need.

The rickety perch held firm while his mother

warmed her hands on her coffee cup, predicted
who might attend the local apple festival in an accent
my New York ears would take six more months

to translate well, and my Long Island mouth

would adopt in small measure over three
more years. That dancing cadence, matching

callouses on our hands, the dog asleep beneath
the slats, encouraged me to trust my weight
to the swing, to trust this modest house—

six hundred and ninety-three miles from
my house, two hundred and four miles from
my dorm where my mother thought I was

studying for a microeconomics midterm—
would hold me. I dangled above the dog and lost
myself in her Appalachian song, in the saffron

and crimson waves of those Kentucky hills, gentler
than the roiling Atlantic that battered me through
my uncertain youth. I basked in the arm-drape

of the first boy who taught me I could feel safe in
someone else's hands, that I could be delivered like
an unbroken promise after a baptism of Goldschlager

and apple pie shine into my roommate's resigned
hands, to wake fully clothed with my first tattoo, shoes
still on, to fourteen missed calls from my mother.

Tell the Bees

In Europe, they would tell the bees
about important happenings: new baby,
lost *seanmháthair*, how the eldest

daughter was finally wed and well

on her way to motherhood. Without
news, the bees might stop making

honey, might leave, might die. I gaze
out at the lawn, left long for the little
pollinators, and worry. Should I tell

them you are not coming back?
That your books and polo shirts
Escaped the closets, and my books

are expanding to fill empty space,
like lungs filling with the first breath
of April air after too long inside?

Would they like to know the hound
that haunted the rusted water-spout
where they congregate at noon

has died? If bees have time to listen,
I may hover over the milkweed,
whisper to them so they can go back

to the hive and dance to pass on
gossip, to waggle, shake, and tremble
to my small tragedies and triumphs.

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Colleen S. Harris earned her MFA in Writing from Spalding University. A three-time Pushcart Prize nominee, her poetry collections include *The Light Becomes Us* (Main Street Rag, forthcoming 2025), *Babylon Songs* (First Bite Press,

forthcoming 2026), *These Terrible Sacraments* (Bellowing Ark, 2010; Doubleback, 2019), *The Kentucky Vein* (Punkin House, 2011), *God in My Throat: The Lilith Poems* (Bellowing Ark, 2009), and chapbooks *That Reckless Sound* and *Some Assembly Required* (Pork Belly Press, 2014).

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