

Visitor's Day

by [Evelyn Hooven](#) (November 2024)



Ashes (Edvard Munch, 1895)

“I may have overreacted” was the closest to apology offered. I was alone with the aftermath of your tantrum—its injustice, the pain. Later, I saw that some unintentional service may have been dispensed. Sadly, my role was shown—or was it confirmed? I was, independent of facts, of reality itself, ordained to come through with whatever you needed.

This time, I hadn't called attention to a country restaurant; it might have meant missing a major turn, losing our road.

Fortunately, after a time, there was one other—small, open all day.

You deemed it critically important not to arrive hungry or strained for visitors' day at your children's camp. My own necessities were not your concern.

The directors were likely to offer wine and modest hors d'oeuvres to the visiting parents. We had agreed that since we were neither married nor officially engaged that I would remain at the small inn. It never occurred to me to come anywhere near to crowding you.

Your ex, swiftly re-married, was known to be well provided, not counting the sums she required for paternal visiting rights—sums that your lawyer said, "exceeded normal limits." It seemed it was her turn: "Take it or leave it," knowing you could not leave it. Disputes continued. I had forgiven prior tantrums as tension. This one felt different. A danger to try to adapt.

I felt pulled, all unknowing, into a war zone. Love of power, supplanting the power of love, seemed to sustain the life of this parental couple.

Do some people generate tantrums in order to obliterate another? Did I stand in such danger?

I had grown fond of the children, felt it was natural, but could do nothing to alter a perverse dynamic.

This was your monodrama, could never be our dialogue. I was outside except as supplier.

I dreaded evening, night, next day, and the long drive.

"What should I do?" I asked aloud. Reply came from within—its idiom both unfamiliar and clear: sometimes the sweetest three-letter word is out.

[Table of Contents](#)

Evelyn Hooven graduated from Mount Holyoke College and received her M.A. from Yale University, where she also studied at The Yale School of Drama. A member of the Dramatists' Guild, she has had presentations of her verse dramas at several theatrical venues, including *The Maxwell Anderson Playwrights Series* in Greenwich, CT (after a state-wide competition) and *The Poet's Theatre* in Cambridge, MA (result of a national competition). Her poems and translations from the French and Spanish have appeared in *Parnassus: Poetry in Review*, *ART TIMES*, *Chelsea*, *The Literary Review*, *THE SHOp: A Magazine of Poetry* (in Ireland), *The Tribeca Poetry Review*, *Vallum* (in Montreal), and other journals, and her literary criticism in Oxford University's *Essays in Criticism*.

Follow NER on Twitter [@NERIconoclast](#)