

Woman in Black

by Sue Stern

A woman in black passes me by.
Only dark pupils gleam
through slits in her woven mask,
then I notice her shoes,
elegant, high, with tiny jewels at the toe.

I'm walking to Cheadle.
I think I should stop, say, "Hello,
are you new? When did you come to live here?"
But she's gone.

If we could really speak, I would tell her this—
that my grandmother too was a stranger
in a strange land. How she fled Artic Russia,
the Tsar, traveled a million miles
to find shelter in gentle London.

I would say, I'm a woman like you.
I hold a grieving friend in my arms,
kiss the bruised hand of a child,
make apple crumble from garden fruits,
(that journey from stove to table, I've made
a thousand, thousand times).
rise when someone is sick in the night,
weep with joy when my son takes a wife,
with desolation when my daughter dies.
And pray that we're safe from danger,
that we'll all be well.

All these things I would like to say
to the woman as she passes by.

Next time, I'll smile.

Lilith

independent, Jewish & frankly feminist

Find out how to submit your poetry at www.lilith.org/writers.htm