

Miriam

by [Frederick Buechner](#) in the [February 21, 2006](#) issue

Her house was a three year old's drawing  
of a house—two windows on the second floor  
with two below to flank the door.  
On the porch a pair of supermarket tube  
and webbing chairs in case a guest or two  
dropped by plus one where she could lean way back,  
a coverlet across her knees when fall  
was in the air or she felt ill.

The shades she always kept exactly so,  
the ones above just low  
enough to hide her on her way to bed,  
the ones below up high to let  
some daylight in. Now that the house is empty  
as a drum, they're every whichway  
like an old drunk's stare,  
and somebody's pinched the supermarket chairs.

Sweet Jesus, forgive me all the days I spotted  
her in one of them and slunk behind the trees  
across the street. A caller on her porch  
for all to see she would have rated  
with her trip to England on a plane,  
or winning first prize for her grapenut pie,  
or the day that she retired from the Inn  
and they gave her a purple orchid on a pin.

Or having some boy ask her to dance,  
or being voted president of her class,  
or some spring morning with her room all warm  
and sunlit waking up in Spencer Tracy's arms.