

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.