

1985

Doorway

Margaret Atwood

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Recommended Citation

Atwood, Margaret. "Doorway." *The Iowa Review* 15.1 (1985): 45-46. Web.
Available at: <https://doi.org/10.17077/0021-065X.3167>

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Though they pray, they do not pray
for us. Prayers peel off them
like burned skin healing.
Once they tried to save something,
others or their own souls.
Now they seem to have no use,
like the colours on blind fish.
Nevertheless they are sacred.

They drift through the atmosphere,
their blue eyes sucked dry
by the ordeal of seeing,
exuding gaps in the landscape as water
exudes mist. They blink
and reality shivers.

DOORWAY

I seem to myself to be without power.
To have the power of waiting merely.
Waiting to be told what to say.
But who will tell me?

November is the month of entrance,
month of descent. Which has passed easily,
which has been lenient with me this year.
Nobody's blood on the floor.

My arm lies across this oak desk
in the fading sunlight of four o'clock,
the skin warming, alive still,
the hand unspoken.

Through the window
behind the half-lowered blind, there are
the herbs frost-killed in their boxes,
life retreating to the roots;
beyond them, the rubbishy laneway
owned by nobody.
Where all power is either spent or potential.

Power of the grey stone
resting inert, not shaping itself.
Power of the murdered girl's
bone in the stream, not yet a flute.
Power of a door unopened.