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A Mind Alone

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A Mind Alone . . .

by Gretchen Mall

Finally the door closed and peace reigned. Mother has the baby for the day so I will be able to get at all the things that have been piling up. I had better start with the dishes and there is the washing to do. So much to do and no time to think.

I walked slowly down stairs and started to put the first load in the washer, diapers and diapers, is there ever an end to them? And now outside to hang up the lines. Every time I look at a clothesline I shiver, and I think of Ann. Poor Ann, how could any human mind deteriorate so much that they would take their own life. She couldn't handle problems, they say.

How I miss her. She was the one who talked me into college and she helped me design clothes. How could her talented mind think such thoughts? She had everything any person could want, a loving husband, and little Connie (so talented and shy). Why, oh why, did she do it. She just had a new house, all the money and happiness she wanted. What must she have thought before she stood on the swing and put the callous rope around her neck? She couldn't handle problems, hell, neither can I, but who can?

I guess my mind must have really wandered off, I have so much to do and no one can do it right. The house just isn't clean, nothing is. Mom said I needed a day off, I can do things, it's just that I never seem to have time.

I had better clean the closet, there just isn't enough room. I've tried to tell Paul, he doesn't understand. The first washer must be done, and Oh, it is raining and I'll have to hang the clothes down in the basement. Nothing goes right anymore. I wonder what it is like to die? That is silly, and I have so much to do. Why are the tears falling? I can do things! I have time to do the floors now, goodness it is almost noon. I've got to stop and have a cigarette, and some coffee.

There, the wash is done, and—I wonder what it is like to die? There would be no problems, it is swift and sure. Paul hid all the sleeping pills. But there is so much to do, the closet is so crowded. I will take a warm bath and forget all the problems, but the closet!

The water is so warm and feels so nice. It is almost like sleep, but then so is death, it is just the problems. Paul will be home in about two hours. I must be ready. It is all set. The baby is too much, Paul doesn't understand. Everything is clean and neat, the way it should be, only can't. The closet, how can I rearrange it so things will fit?

I slowly took down the clothes and then the lines. The rope was so heavy, and it would be so easy and painless, and neat; and then no more problems. I can't handle another baby, I can't tell Paul. I won't. I looked at my hands and found I was making a noose, so easy and clean. I slipped the rope over the beam and thought I finally understood Ann. Life can be too hard. I balanced for a moment on Becky's swing and thought, it's just all the problems. I can't handle them. I can't!

Sunday Morning . . .

The ship was piered at Norfolk port.
Its guts were wormed with men
All rushing through excited tasks
To set to sea again!
Each moved with vows of vengeance.
Their hearts were gnawed with dread
For war had belched its bitter bile
And many mates lie dead
On Neptune's unfinished carpet.
Mosaic begun with time
Revealing histories but to the dead—
Tongueless players in mime.

. . . Sherwood Snyder III