

**don't look at me**

Jochebed P. Airede

don't look at me,  
don't touch me,  
i wonder why you only see me  
like this.  
wonder why your eyes only  
sight  
the tease and sensual promise  
of my smile.  
don't look at me,  
don't touch me.  
you're making me ashamed;  
making me think  
that i've been calling to you in a dirty way.  
don't *look* at me,  
don't *touch* me.  
this isn't fair.  
i've begun to blame myself  
for your uncomelier stare.  
i don't ask for you to notice me;  
(I *never* ask for you to notice me)  
but you always do,

your eyes following my every fluid move,  
rotten-toothed smile  
sending shivers  
down my spine.  
don't *look* at me,  
don't you *dare* touch me.  
i have nowhere to turn;  
nothing to help  
spurn  
your '*affection.*'  
because They are on your side. They are *always* on your side.  
your age (my age),  
your status (my status),  
your gender (*my gender*) –  
everything is in your favour.  
*Everything.*  
don't *look* at me;  
and don't you *dare* touch me.  
i am exhausted.  
gosh, i'm exhausted.  
i've been since i was  
thirteen,  
since i seemed old enough to be legally coveted.

since every smile i threw,  
every curve i knew,  
became something to be  
thirsted after.  
since every dress  
that clung to my swelling form became something to  
question, something to abhor.  
because i didn't want you to notice me, i never wanted you to  
notice me – *but that's stopped mattering, hasn't it?*  
just this once,  
i would like to disappear.  
just this once,  
i would like to fade into the background.  
just this once.  
i don't know what else to do about you.  
i don't know how else to handle you,  
and what you think of me.  
because you always have to think of what to *do* to me and  
how to *have* me –  
but you never consider the joy of just  
*knowing* me.  
you never bother to know me.  
you never bother to wonder about the spools of knowledge

in my head;  
the thread of ideas  
bouncing about  
uncontrolled,  
unrestrained,  
beneath the skin  
and coils  
of my scalp.  
how come you never bother  
like a brother  
would?  
for i know you would *never* let anyone treat your sister like you  
treat me –  
but i wonder,  
why *you never see it that way*.  
i take a break now,  
and take a glance in the  
proverbial waters.  
i've to speak to myself too,  
for that's as equally important  
as lamenting you.  
i take a moment to realign  
and remind myself

to cradle my treasure-filled spools  
like i would  
a baby;  
to appreciate the precious jewels of intellect lining their  
crevices,  
like crystals  
down a mine shaft;  
to see myself the way my God sees me, as more than a pretty  
object to play with one day, when you feel some type of way,  
then trash the next.  
i tell myself  
every day.  
i tell myself.  
so, again, to you:  
*don't look at me,*  
*don't touch me.*  
*don't **look** at me,*  
*don't **touch** me.*  
*don't look at me,*  
*and don't you **dare** touch me.*