

“The Broken Bird”
an excerpted poem from

SHIPWRIGHT

by M. RANDOLPH MASON

He undressed and slipped in with her. He pulled her half onto himself, replicating the position in which he was used to finding her when he awakened. Because her face was on his chest, he could place his left hand on the boney ridge of her back and his right hand cupping the golf ball sized junction of her left shoulder. Lee could not bring himself to pull the covers completely over her head. He played with the hem of the blanket until he had fashioned a breathing hole next to her face.

Lee settled down to reflect until the never remembered onset of sleep.

“She is not a child. She is a brilliant woman recovering from a devastating illness. Her frail body is getting better; right now she’s just tired. Someday her little emaciated figure will catch up to the breathtaking beauty of her face and hair. You find that you love everything she is and everything she will be. You have not failed the challenge - the reward is this wonderful little child of God. Not to worry.”

*Searching in vane from room to room
no succor within my broken heart;
Stood myself by the rain flecked window
and stared into the gathering dark.*

*Self pity the source of my last, last tears
that patted like thunder on the cool wood floor;
I sentenced myself to go out into the gloom
and the dusk and the damp outside my door.*

*As I exited my empty, cold broken home
to pursue and exact my punishment game;
I heard the thump of your tiny body
as you crashed into the window pane.*

*In horror I searched in the drift piled leaves
in the fast falling darkness beneath the sill;
I desperately, desperately hoped on hope
such force did not your body kill.*

*At the very last instant of the very last glow
I carried you inside from the now total night;
To discover you breathed, tho scarcely at all
all battered and wet and being so slight.*

*I quickly and carefully wrapped you in cloth
and tucked you in my shirt, next to my heart;
And hope upon hope, I prayed my warmth*

might save your life if it did its part.

*With care you lived, you flew again
your dark eyes opened and you spread your wings;
Though you did not try to share your voice
I imagined in my heart I could hear you sing.*

*So shared I a miracle with a fragile bird
one I shall ponder for the rest of my time;
When realized I, in the saving of yours
that the life that was saved – in truth, was mine!*

Peace settled also over Lee.

About the Author

M. Randolph Mason is a retired Army officer who now teaches math and science at a small, private, military academy in Alabama. In 2007 he was recalled to active duty where he served in Baghdad, Iraq for the year.

As the son-of-a-son-of-a-sailor - his father a navy sea captain - he grew up on and around the waters of Chesapeake Bay and maritime Florida. In his lifetime he has lived in twenty-three locations, including five years in Europe, which has enabled him to be conversational in three languages.

Of all his many avocations, which include watercolor painting and music, Mason is most enamored with sailing. His nautical passion is particularly evident in the beautifully descriptive story, *Shipwright*.