

# To have without holding

By Marge Piercy

Learning to love differently is hard,  
love with the hands wide open, love  
with the doors banging on their hinges,  
the cupboard unlocked, the wind  
roaring and whimpering in the rooms  
rustling the sheets and snapping the blinds  
that thwack like rubber bands  
in an open palm.

It hurts to love wide open  
stretching the muscles that feel  
as if they are made of wet plaster,  
then of blunt knives, then  
of sharp knives.

It hurts to thwart the reflexes  
of grab, of clutch ; to love and let  
go again and again. It pesters to remember  
the lover who is not in the bed,  
to hold back what is owed to the work  
that gutters like a candle in a cave  
without air, to love consciously,  
conscientiously, concretely, constructively.

I can't do it, you say it's killing  
me, but you thrive, you glow  
on the street like a neon raspberry,  
You float and sail, a helium balloon  
bright bachelor's button blue and bobbing  
on the cold and hot winds of our breath,  
as we make and unmake in passionate  
diastole and systole the rhythm  
of our unbound bonding, to have  
and not to hold, to love  
with minimized malice, hunger  
and anger moment by moment balanced.

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Marge Piercy was born in Detroit, Michigan. An extremely prolific writer, Piercy has published 17 volumes of poetry and 17 novels. She has also written plays, several volumes of nonfiction, a memoir, and has edited the anthology *Early Ripening: American Women's Poetry Now*. Much of her work addresses themes of feminism, Marxism, and environmentalism. Piercy has also played an active role in a number of political causes, including the anti-Vietnam war movement, the women's movement, and the resistance to the war in Iraq.

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