

SHIRLEY M. FLOWERS

Going to the Dorm

My Mother sits by the window, crying
Her heart is breaking
It's the same memory every fall
The plane has taken her children away
They are gone for all winter
It's time for them to go to school
School is ninety miles away
We will not see them again
For ten months.

In the Spring
My brothers and sisters return
The plane flies overhead
My Mother is crying and running
She's crippled, but she can run today!

I hide behind my Mother's dress
I'm shy
My brothers and sisters
Are strangers.

Soon it will be my turn
To go.
When I turn twelve or thirteen years
I have to leave too.
I'm scared and excited
At the same time.
I'm venturing out to a new world.

I'm living in a room full of strangers
Some are kind, some are cruel
I'm constantly homesick and I cry all the time.
My heart is breaking
I want to be home.

I see someone who might
Help me
I walk up to his car and say
"Can you send me home please
I'm lonesome and it's making me sick"
The person doesn't answer
He just looks at me
And drives away
Leaving me crying, standing in a cloud of dust.

Next thing I know
I'm being told that I'm a trouble-maker
The principal of our school
Has been advised that I want to go home.
I'm told that what I'm saying and feeling
Is upsetting others
And causing problems for the people who run
the place.
And there's no way that I can go home.
All hope is lost
I just have to get through this year.

My God, how can people do this?
How can they own my life?
I feel like I must be in a prison
I can't get away
I can't see my parents
My heart is breaking.
I hate it here.
Sometimes I have to fight for food
We have to work hard
To look after the place.
I can't wait to get out of here.

Spring comes
I can go home soon
I will never come back
I do though, one more time
This time I run away
No one can make me stay here.

Now when I look at my
Teenage daughter
I realize some of what I lost
How do I be a mother to her?
I wasn't with my Mother when I was her age.
My heart breaks
But this time, all is not lost
No one owns my life.
I am free
And this freedom, I will share with her.

Shirley M. Flowers was raised in Rigolet. She is currently living in Happy Valley, Goose Bay, Labrador.