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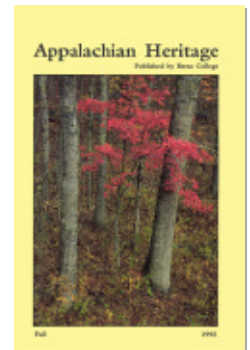
Friend and Lover

Phyllis Wilson Moore

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“Katie, come in the kitchen NOW!”

Katherine is a gazelle off the couch. “Yes, ma’am!” This is the way Granny Roberts bosses her, and this voice from the kitchen could be for all the world her granny. Katherine pushes wide the kitchen door and sees Mavis, eyes squeezed closed, propped up against the wall over by the stove. Applesauce is splattered everywhere, across the stove, and down the cabinet to the floor. Mavis holds her right hand under her left elbow to support her applesauce covered forearm.

“She’s burning! What to do, Katie? A canning jar blew. The emergency room? The rescue squad?” Regina rattles on, but it’s her Granny Roberts’ voice Katherine hears. “Talk out the fire, Katie. Talk out the fire from her arm like I did on Daddy. Remember Ezeikel 6:16.” Katherine closes her eyes. The litany flows from her heart through her mouth as slowly and deeply she inhales, exhales, then bends near to Mavis’s arm. Gently swaying from side to side and speaking in an imperceptible monotone, she croons over the scalded skin.

While Mavis sits at the kitchen table with her arm deep in ice water soaking off the applesauce, the medics arrive. As her welcome to them, the old woman waves a deep rose, splotchy, blister-free arm. Although she protests a hospital exam, Mavis finally consents, and Regina goes with her. Thank goodness! According to the stove clock, there are still ten minutes left on *Wheel of Fortune*. She would clean up the mess later.

Back in the living room Katherine picks up the remote control, her thumb hovering over the “power on” button. It’s still daylight, and she’s got some time before she picks up Sonny. Maybe she’ll just go out front and sweep the porch, maybe rake leaves for a while. Well, maybe not.

Friend and Lover

In the glow
of our anniversary
your wrinkles unwind

you surprise my eyes

—Phyllis Wilson Moore