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time to go, and: Julieanna

Rita Quillen

Appalachian Heritage, Volume 12, Number 2, Spring 1984, pp. 24-25  
(Article)

Published by The University of North Carolina Press

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1353/aph.1984.0035>



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<https://muse.jhu.edu/article/438476/summary>



## Two Poems

by RITA QUILLEN



time to go

the old woman  
spits amber stars in the dust  
standing on a long road leading nowhere  
except Elmwood Hills Subdivision  
where multi-level houses stand mostly empty  
save for the american dream  
of wet bars, color tv, and pool tables -

and on down the road a piece  
a lane made by VW buses pressing down the grass  
leads to a properly aged farmhouse  
where rusty buckets catch water from the roof  
and solemn young women in earth-colored clothing  
chop wood and raise chickens  
living, walking memories  
to the old woman  
who keeps silent watch

she holds her breath, standing and watching  
between the two  
there in the stardust road  
and packs her jaw with more tobacco -  
she's thinking what a hard time they'll all have  
adjusting  
and congratulates herself for living just long enough.

## JULIEANNA

Mamaw stops talking  
she sits birdlike by the window  
on a green vinyl chair  
her toothless mouth opens, closes  
collapses right into her face  
her hands circle slowly around and around  
as she talks  
every vein dark blue and swollen

I watch and wait  
can't take my eyes off her  
she keeps glancing at the clock on the mantel  
then back at me

eyes dull like old windowpanes  
but deep as forever  
stare out the window at yesterdays  
when she worked with her man  
in steamy fields

she also remembers her babies  
two alive and grown  
two dead at birth  
blood coming out their ears  
she can still smell  
a hot kitchen full of men  
after a hard day  
feel her own light, quick step  
move sure through the garden

sometimes she thinks she hears Paw  
saying "Julie"  
and she almost answers

we sit together  
the old mantel clock ticks loud .....