**45 Mercy Street**

**Anne Sexton**

In my dream,

drilling into the marrow

of my entire bone,

my real dream,

I'm walking up and down Beacon Hill

searching for a street sign -

namely MERCY STREET.

Not there.

I try the Back Bay.

Not there.

Not there.

And yet I know the number.

45 Mercy Street.

I know the stained-glass window

of the foyer,

the three flights of the house

with its parquet floors.

I know the furniture and

mother, grandmother, great-grandmother,

the servants.

I know the cupboard of Spode

the boat of ice, solid silver,

where the butter sits in neat squares

like strange giant's teeth

on the big mahogany table.

I know it well.

Not there.

Where did you go?

45 Mercy Street,

with great-grandmother

kneeling in her whale-bone corset

and praying gently but fiercely

to the wash basin,

at five A.M.

at noon

dozing in her wiggy rocker,

grandfather taking a nap in the pantry,

grandmother pushing the bell for the downstairs maid,

and Nana rocking Mother with an oversized flower

on her forehead to cover the curl

of when she was good and when she was...

And where she was begat

and in a generation

the third she will beget,

me,

with the stranger's seed blooming

into the flower called Horrid.

I walk in a yellow dress

and a white pocketbook stuffed with cigarettes,

enough pills, my wallet, my keys,

and being twenty-eight, or is it forty-five?

I walk. I walk.

I hold matches at street signs

for it is dark,

as dark as the leathery dead

and I have lost my green Ford,

my house in the suburbs,

two little kids

sucked up like pollen by the bee in me

and a husband

who has wiped off his eyes

in order not to see my inside out

and I am walking and looking

and this is no dream

just my oily life

where the people are alibis

and the street is unfindable for an

entire lifetime.

Pull the shades down -

I don't care!

Bolt the door, mercy,

erase the number,

rip down the street sign,

what can it matter,

what can it matter to this cheapskate

who wants to own the past

that went out on a dead ship

and left me only with paper?

Not there.

I open my pocketbook,

as women do,

and fish swim back and forth

between the dollars and the lipstick.

I pick them out,

one by one

and throw them at the street signs,

and shoot my pocketbook

into the Charles River.

Next I pull the dream off

and slam into the cement wall

of the clumsy calendar

I live in,

my life,

and its hauled up

notebooks.

.KonaBody