

*Lyn Lifshin*

## **Spiritual**

Have you noticed anything about those who describe themselves or their writing or painting as spiritual? Do you cringe, as some might at the words “fuck” or “shit?” that, tho maybe crude, don’t offend me? The “spiritual” aren’t able to say them, out-loud at least. There’s something about the ones who say they are, like others who say they’re so glad they live in the north or south or east or west where people are lovelier, imply of course that you probably aren’t. I notice those who keep praising their spirituality say you don’t understand suggesting it is because you aren’t. But I notice these “spiritual” people often aren’t. Isn’t it phony to gush what a godly person you are and then dream a banishment room for your husband, care more about money you are making than about much else. When the spiritual gush, does your skin crawl too? Those Pollyannas you could never be, forget the mystical. And when they end their e mail with “life is good and it gets better every day if you think it is,” don’t you just want to go and take a bath?

## Have You Ever Looked at an Old Diary

and thought that was who I was  
at 15 and I still am? Forget  
an idea that when you're  
older, what tore you up then  
won't, that you're not ever to  
reminisce about the boys  
so electric you put only  
initials in a diary with a 50  
cent lock, afraid the whole  
name would scorch you?  
Whoever said getting older  
means anything but getting  
older? Do you think I'll  
toast wisdom or sense? Do  
you really think there's  
more and there's more that's  
different? Look at your own  
little apartment, your little,  
little life and even if you've  
won prizes—I've won some,  
not the huge ones—but could  
it be better, really different  
than the few lines a diary the  
old cover peals from, "went  
to Morrisville and won 1st  
prize" and all the exclamations.  
Now, really is a yawn and is  
ennui better than the litany  
of boys who were dolls?  
Or is it now you don't even  
bother to look? And wouldn't  
you like a day when the  
big question is "I wonder if  
I should pierce my ears?"

## **The Black Silk Skirt Falling**

as if it was her,  
something in her  
leaving, stepping  
out of her last  
skin, chrysalis  
about to be free  
as the grackles  
she watched those  
last days. This  
dream on the eve  
of my mother's  
birthday, there  
was something in  
the sound of her  
skirt falling,  
a pool blacker  
than midnight  
nothing was  
reflected in. Then  
the whoosh, the  
wind of where  
she was and then  
wasn't. These days  
of rain, as if to  
wash her away.  
Still, like the water  
fall outside our  
apartment window,  
she tumbles like  
a river, so loud and  
close to me I  
forget she  
isn't