

Andrea Hollander

At First All We Want Is to Get Where We're Going

The sun hot on my shoulders, the bus stop crowded,
the bus, full when it reaches us and now fuller,
pulls east toward the Hawthorne Bridge
and more east across the hectic street
where more and more cars slow the traffic,
and I try not to sway as I stand in the aisle,
one arm up to grasp the grab bar,
the other around the bouquet
from Gifford's I hover over
like the mother of a newborn,
at each stop the aisle growing
calmer, emptier, and most of us
relieved enough at our departure
to shout thanks to the driver
whose face I forget altogether
as the sun glints off the Bagdad Theater
and I step off the bus and leave the sound
of all that traffic behind and turn down
this residential street that grows
quieter and a little bit cooler
while I move beneath tulip trees
no longer in bloom although
snapdragons and hollyhocks rise
like an entourage on either side
of the sidewalk the closer I get
to the dinner Suzanne has been making
all day in her kitchen, the bouquet I carry

quite unharmed, the freesias I wanted
so out of season the clerk pulled
three blue hydrangeas from a pail,
then from a glass-doored cooler
four yellow roses, and wrapped them
together in a funnel of plain tan paper,
the scent of the roses just as I reach
Suzanne and Robert's house
overtaken by the odor
of simmering curry that strays
through the screen door
and out onto the porch
to greet me.