

Just for a Moment

To a friend with, I hope, understanding:
Just for a moment let me come in.
Let me not have to stand here on the porch,
The lobby of your love,
Peering through windows frosted
And nearly opaque,
Stretching tiptoe
For merely a peek into a part of my own heart:
Flesh of my flesh, blood of my blood
Soul of my Soul!
I—closest of kin, no relation at all—
Stand on the rim of my used-to-be world
Sighing for a single sight of genuine recognition.
Oh, I realize your perplexity.
What is the function of a parent parted?
How does one greet a father who left?
How can one say, "Though relations are strained,
Kith is kind"?

But think of my position, too.
Yes, I left. Long ago I left,
Leaving a large lump of me
And carrying you, a neat little package of pain,
Tucked tightly away in my chest.
And except for now-and-then visits—
Uncomfortable interviews pointedly polished—
We didn't meet, didn't mix,
Didn't share more than our common name.
Except in my brain!
Except in my brain when the memory
Hurling its hurt
Thrust itself upon me
And began to consume me till I visibly winced
And mechanically sought diverting thought
Which never erased
The constant nudge of you.
Well, here I stand, an inside-outer looking in,
Wanting, Oh wanting to cry, "Child!"
And daring scarcely ask more than "Friend?"

John B. Harris