

Loneliness
By Michele Venne

A single woman strolls along the path that weaves among ancient, leafy trees
meandering over the green velvet of lawn
wandering, sighing, wishing.

Clouds separate the sun from the earth
raising bumps on her skin like that of a scaly lizard
wrapping her arms around her middle in an effort of warmth
knowing the chill inside to be degrees below that of the shade
cooling, holding, dreaming.

She stops in the middle of the wooden bridge arching over the stream
looking into the water
feeling thankful that the rocks produce swirls, bubbles, falls
hiding her reflection
gurgling, rushing, carrying away.

Families share a meal on heirloom quilts
uncaring of the grass blades beneath
enjoying dill-filled potato salad, cold fried chicken, deep red wine that looks delicious but
knowing it would be the insipid flavor of overcooked macaroni, hold the cheese
wanting, hoping, reaching.

The woman turns away to follow the path deeper into the trees or
spying the bench receiving warming rays
choosing, feeling, believing.