

When I Die
Doug Van Hooser

You have inherited whatever soaked your sponge.
 Recycle what you want.
 Shovel your own waste.
Nod knowingly even when you disagree.
 Take your mistakes by the hand.
 Remember wasps always sting,
bees not usually.
 Low hanging fruit tastes just as good
 but get out the ladder.
When you are out of breath you know it was worth it.
 Don't fear a challenge
 but don't embrace it like an old friend.
Perfunctory may be nice but sincerity rings the bells.
 Oh, I'm lecturing, pretending you are listening.
 I delude myself.
Remember to do that occasionally.
 It's called optimism.
 It's the best baggage handler
you'll ever meet.
 Stones are hard for many reasons:
 to stumble over and stub your toe,
to bang against the door, to break glass.
 Don't look in a mirror
 unless you want to meet the enemy.
O.K., that's enough.
 Someday you'll wring out
 the sponge.

Doug Van Hooser's poetry has appeared in *Roanoke Review*, *Sheila-Na-Gig*, *After Hours*, *Wild Roof Journal*, and *Poetry Quarterly*, among other publications. His fiction can be found in *Red Earth Review*, *Flash Fiction Magazine*, and *Bending Genres Journal*. Doug's plays have received readings at Chicago Dramatist Theatre and Three Cat Productions. More at dougvanhooser.com