

To Bike

On to my bicycle, off into the morning, the ride begins. My children are left behind, bright and shining at school. A wife? She set sail before dawn, and is now plying test tubes and beakers in her lab, or sparkling phrases across a computer screen. My bones and muscles issue tiny aches, but are soon flooded with warm blood and oxygen, and they fall into pace. Spin, spin, spin, pedals crank and wheels fly. Down the scary steep incline to the bridge across the river I drift. At my side, commuters sit in cars nose-to-tail, commingling oxygen and exhaust. Quickly I drop off the bridge on a cat ramp to the canal.

My legs churn hard now, untroubled by car traffic. A low mist hangs on the river, quieting the scene. A solitary blue heron watches for his meal. Turtles slump in and out of the brown mix. Ducks paddle silently, lapping algae. Quickly the towpath turns paved and I merge with other cyclists, roller bladers and walkers, dancing one amongst the other.

I race on, into the belly of the city, under the bridge abutments and freeway, past the old power plant turned into million dollar condos, across to the river's edge. Student racers in their shells slice the river, coxswains calling cadence. I cut across restaurant plazas, and turn away from the river and uphill to my office, cautiously weaving through traffic. With a quick wave and flash of a badge, I drop into the office garage. Up to the gym for a quick shower and dress, I then settle at my desk, capillaries seeping with warmth and oxygen, mind focused.

Traveling home, I reverse. Out of the city traffic to the river like a melon seed ejected from moist lips, across the now burbling restaurant plaza, toward Key Bridge, its crescent arches silhouetted by low sun, I ride. Up the Crescent Trail to the C&O Canal, over Chain Bridge and up that fearsome hill, to my hiding spot in the Arlington hills. Dinner with children and wife, reflections on our full days – accomplishments and concerns, quiet affections, warmth.

Thank you, dear bike, for carrying me home.