

# TAKE HEART

## A Conversation in Poetry

*Edited & Introduced by Wesley McNair,  
Maine Poet Laureate*

Poet and artist Haines Tate of Waterville died of cancer in 2012 at age forty six, but not without writing this love poem for her husband, Duncan.

### Balloon

*by Haines Sprunt Tate*

*for D*

This is the poem I meant to give you  
for your birthday: a kind of balloon  
that would rise on a slight draft  
to float above the occasion,  
taut and bright and full of easy breath  
with a long ribbon trailing down  
for holding onto or tying to your chair.

After you'd opened all the presents  
while everyone oohed and ahed,  
after the cake and candles,  
the joker gifts and For He's a Jolly  
Good Fellow and they'd all gone home  
glad it hadn't been their turn  
to blow the flame off another year,  
that's when I meant to say, Look,  
Love, what I made for you:  
Take it and don't let go –

But now your birthday's done  
and I'd be heartless to remind you  
with a thing deflated, wrinkling,  
that bumps the corners of the hall  
more off-kilter every day,  
so far from its highest aspirations.  
Though I almost think you'd crack  
a smile to see how it's outlasted  
all the fuss: the cake, the cards  
and all the company but one  
old procrastinator, old hanger-on.

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