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 ahhed, 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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