

Upon awakening

JANET PROULX

The alarm clock makes me feel so wise
18 when I'm dreaming, 50 when I rise
through thick layers of sleep
to find that I'm no longer young and crazy
but middle-aged and dependable
in my thick flannel nightgown
slippers by the bed.

I think of the day ahead
deadlines and responsibilities
and the nursing home,
where my mother waits for me to arrive
with freshly laundered clothes
or some little surprise.

When I leave her, she smiles
though it never quite reaches the eyes
that watch me walk away,
carrying a load of dirty laundry
and guilt
because we put her there after dad died.

At fifty, only a little bit crazy
my eyes are wide open.
I see things clearly,
even without the thick glasses that lay on the dresser,
waiting for my tapping fingers to find them.