

## A WEDDING

She was in terrible pain the whole day,  
as she had been for months: a slipped disc,  
and there is nothing more painful. She

herself was a nurse's aid, also a poet  
just beginning to make a name for her  
nom de plume. As with most things in life,

it happened when she was changing channels  
on her television. The lucky man, on the other  
hand, was smiling for the first time

in his life, and it was fake. He was  
an aspiring philosopher of dubious potential,  
very serious, but somehow lacking in

essential depth. He could have been  
an adequate undertaker. It was not the first  
time for either of them. It was a civil

service, with no music, few flowers.  
Still, there was a slow and erratic tide  
of champagne—corks shot clear into trees.

And flashcubes, instant photos, some blurred  
and some too revealing, cake slices that aren't  
what they were meant to be. The bride slept

through much of it, and never did we figure out  
who was on whose team. I think the groom  
meant it in the end when he said, "We never

thought anyone would come." We were not the first  
to arrive, nor the last to leave. Who knows,

it may all turn out for the best. And who

really cares about such special days, they  
are not what we live for.

*This poem conjures the realization that ordinary days are the special ones. The performative element of weddings and celebrations gets gently called out here. We sense the future's uncertainty. The poem lifts the mask on the stress and underlying weirdness of the pomp and frill days, it lifts the mask of social ease. It tells us that it is both hard and wonderful to be alive.*

- Natalie Lyalin