

5-1-2013

A Poem Inspired by the Story of Jennings Burch in They Cage the Animals at Night

Gillian Newman

Nova Southeastern University

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Recommended Citation

Newman, Gillian (2013) "A Poem Inspired by the Story of Jennings Burch in They Cage the Animals at Night," *Hieroglyphics: the NSU University School Literary Magazine*: Vol. 19 , Article 50.

Available at: https://nsuworks.nova.edu/uschool_litmag/vol19/iss1/50

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**A Poem Inspired by the Story of Jennings Burch in
They Cage the Animals at Night by Gillian Newman**

I used to think that love didn't exist until you said it

**But then, when they kept leaving, and I felt the pain
I knew love was sometimes quiet**

I used to think that love was just the good stuff,

**but when distance and circumstance seemed to sever my limbs
love let my heart go limp
it was like the silence broke it**

Was it the silence? Or was I broken?

I used to think that traveling place to place would never allow my love to escape

**but I was wrong, because it did,
and it never grew bored.**

**It escaped through
my fingers, my eyes, and my lips
I thought it would stay put until I said it
but my mind changed when I left it
When it left me**



Wanting to indulge in the words, "I love you! I love you! I love you!"

**I used to think that the word "love" was something that no one liked to hear
Unless it was on the big screen, or in books, or in fear
But then love became a word that always seemed to be stuck in my throat
a condition that caused me to cough and choke
But when I let my best friend's big heart kill him
When I let my brothers drift day after day
When I let my first love walk away
with the words that I couldn't relay
I felt poorer than the holes in my socks
and the tears in my shirt
the scuffs on my face and my Doggie covered in dirt
I felt impoverished being unable to say
I love you to all those who walked away**

**Yes, I love you, I love you, and I love you too
And if you had known, maybe you would have stayed**

Photography by: Selina Santos