



A Strange Predicament, by Pavithra Mehta

When I stop to consider the facts they astonish me.
There you are, couched in your own skin, and
Here I am in mine. No matter how close
We must each do our own living.
Your heart cannot be persuaded to pump my blood
My lungs will not consent to breathe for yours.
It is an odd arrangement.

Inside me, a mansion of memory and anticipation.
A place other people may visit, like a museum.
Inside you, a similar mansion, that I can visit
With your permission, gaze at pictures on the wall.
But only until closing time.

And is this not a strange predicament?
This seeming and inescapable individuality?
The hard shell of "I" that we live inside,
Like soft-bodied sea creatures.
When did we choose this? On whose ill-advice?

How different the world would be
If we could waft through different identities
As easily as the wind inhabits the trees.

Then the woman selling flowers at the street corner would be me.
And the crumpled leaf of the half-blown rose in her bucket would be
me. And the man reaching into his back pocket to pay for the bouquet
"me. Me. Me. Me.

Then I would not be "I" any more. And neither would you.
No not at all and never again.

Once out of the bottle no genie of sound mind
Ever chooses to return
To such cramped, uncomfortable quarters.