



1999

# Affected

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*Michelle Bridges*

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**What Everyone is Secretly Afraid Of**

If I exploded and I lost my bits  
And pieces, say they break, they drown, they fly,  
What's my response? I'd quake, I'd frown, I'd cry  
With what was left to throw a string of fits.

What noise accompanies this type of blast?  
A sonic boom? A crashing ocean wave?  
A fallen rock resounding through a cave?  
The world and all its ears would feel my last.

I think, should this occasion come,  
(I'm sure it is the fear of every man,)  
I'd find a wall behind which I could stand  
To hide from shrapnel which was once my sum.

**Affected**

To fear God is to moan  
much like a jealous almost-artist  
    in the presence of a mighty gallery  
        for the hand of the arm of the body of myself  
    is a sculpture of flesh, animated.  
The bumps in the back, humps  
    on the camel, live dromedary  
        holding hinges for five firm worms  
    with hard hats each.  
Each one the trunk of a tree, with deepening  
    rings of increasing old age,  
        all joining in outburst of flesh foliage;  
palm producing the fruit of all my labors,  
    cradling cranberry tributaries  
    and criss-crossed canyons.  
So then, to fear God is to wiggle my fingers madly.