

Fictional Characters

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Do they ever want to escape?
Climb out of the curved white pages
and enter our world?

Holden Caulfield slipping in the side door
of the movie theater to catch the two o'clock.
Anna Karenina sitting in the local diner,
reading the paper as the waitress
in a bright green uniform
serves up a cheeseburger and a Coke.

Even Hector, on break from the *Iliad*,
takes a stroll through the park,
admires a fresh bed of tulips.

Who knows? Maybe
they were growing tired
of the author's mind,
all its twists and turns,

or they were finally weary
of stumbling around Pamplona,
a bottle in each fist,
eating lotuses on the banks of the Nile.

Perhaps it was just too hot
in the small California town
where they'd been written into
a lifetime of plowing fields.

Whatever the reason, here they are,
content to spend the day
roaming the city streets, rain falling
on their phantasmal shoulders,
enjoying the bustle of the crowd.

Wouldn't you, if you could?
Step out of your own story
to lean for an afternoon against the doorway
of the five-and-dime, sipping your coffee,

your life somewhere far behind you,
all its heat and toil nothing but a tale
resting in the hands of a stranger,
the dingy sidewalk ahead wet and glistening.