

someone who isn't real

I thought she was the most beautiful woman in the world
I believed she could do anything she wanted
I thought she was just the victim of a bad marriage
I figured once she was done with the kids
 she'd take some classes at the community college
 maybe get a degree
 use her mind
 improve her situation
 make a better life for herself

but instead
she kept on making decisions that seemed crazy to me
 putting herself in more bad situations
 hooking up with the wrong men
 aiming for the bottom
 swallowing more quicksand
 staying trapped.

I wanted to save her
I thought it was my job
I tried to rescue every woman I met who reminded me of her
 girlfriends
 friends' girlfriends
 coworkers
 strippers
any woman I saw as bright attractive and full of potential
 but stuck in some raw deal.

I got myself in a lot of trouble that way.

finally
after many failures and humiliations
I began to see what I was doing
I began to trace back down through the branches of the tree
 to the root
and I saw a woman I hadn't seen before
she wasn't who I thought she was
 and she wasn't who she said she was
not then
not now.

we're defined by our actions
at least as much as by our words
and I began to see that her words and actions
 were way out of sync.

she's old now
she lives alone
her grandchildren are far away

I feel for her
I know this isn't how she wanted it
I know this isn't how she saw her life
 when she was 10 or 20 or 30
I don't see the woman I used to see
 but I still see the sad little farm girl
 who wanted more.

I've tried my best to be closer with her
again and again
 but she won't allow it
she tells me everything's fine with us
 when it's not fine
and she won't have it any other way.

I want to let her be who she is
and I try
 but it's hard to do it
 when she's not willing to let me be
 who I am.

I want to love her as she is
and I try
 but it's hard to love someone
 who isn't real.