

Amaranthus

Volume 1980 | Issue 1

Article 25

2-6-2013

Watching Michael Go

Patricia A. Bridges
Grand Valley State University

Follow this and additional works at: <http://scholarworks.gvsu.edu/amaranthus>

Recommended Citation

Bridges, Patricia A. (1980) "Watching Michael Go," *Amaranthus*: Vol. 1980: Iss. 1, Article 25.
Available at: <http://scholarworks.gvsu.edu/amaranthus/vol1980/iss1/25>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by ScholarWorks@GVSU. It has been accepted for inclusion in Amaranthus by an authorized administrator of ScholarWorks@GVSU. For more information, please contact scholarworks@gvsu.edu.

Watching Michael Go

Patricia A. Bridges

The smell of flowers always reminds me of Michael--not really, but always, sort of. . . .

Mother sits a little behind me, on the right, surrounded by a black wall of ladies. They all wear dark, curious-looking nets over their eyes and carry white lace hankies that smell of perfume.

"He looks so sweet. . ."

Does that mean it is Michael, and not the flowers, that smell so good? I have never seen so many flowers before. . . across the room (it looks very far away) clustered around a . . .bassinet? It is much prettier than the one he has at home. And behind it, a huge, milky square of window is all but hidden by rows and rows of marvelous blossoms. . . white ones, red ones, yellow ones. White, most of them, with pale blue strips of ribbon hanging from them in wide, fancy curls. I like the ones that look like paper horns the best. Gramma says they're the ones fairies like for sleeping in.

Daddy is here, too. His back is towards me, so I can't see his face. But I know it's him because he's so big. . .like the tallest tree on a mountaintop that stands out from all the others no matter how far away from it you get. The way he stands there, rubbing under his thick eyeglasses with one hand. . . slowly opening and then closing the other, crushing the empty air at his side. . . He doesn't look especially large. He just looks hard, the way he mostly does. I do not want him to notice that I am staring at him. "Look away. Look away," I tell my bad eyes. "Don't let him catch you seeing!"

There are other ladies, and a few men in heavy black suits like the one Daddy is wearing, sitting awkwardly in a tangle of brown metal chairs. Some of them seem to be watching the flowers. Some of them, though I don't turn around to see, are watching me.

I approach the . . .bassinet. . .timidly. "Don't touch, don't even lean on the edge." There is a filmy white cloth over the hood. . .and beneath it lies Michael. He still smells like a baby, all clean and powdered and new. It is queer, though, the way he is so still (little brothers never hold still). . .peaceful, satiny smooth, just like the tiny cushion his head is resting on. I wait for Mother to call me away, but she doesn't.

No one speaks to me. No one even asks me my age, and I am very proud of being three. I have only been three for a little while, but none of them care today. Through a set of towering, dark colored doors, in the next . . .parlor? . . .I can see another group of people gathered in front of a large, oblong box. I think again of the fairies and, finding none dozing at my brother's side, decide to investigate this other. . .parlor?

Skipping a little across the carpet, I notice everyone is beginning to look at me again. Something is terribly wrong. I am supposed to be sad. . .but I am not sad. . .then I must be bad. A guilty grin tugs at the corners of my mouth. "Don't let Daddy catch you misbehaving. . .Worry, Worry, Worry. . .Playing nervously with my hair, I walk slowly out of the room.

. . .Suddenly. . .I am on eye level with a little old lady who is resting in the oblong box, running my mouth along the side, nose on top of the side edge inhaling the rich wood. In one swift movement I bolt upright. . .Panic!. . .and turn around. . .But the only person who seems to have noticed me is another little old lady. . .a friend of the one in the box? She just smiles at me and I know she somehow understands. Secretly, I think all old people have a special magic. Gramma almost always knows what I am thinking, even when I do not.

. . .Fairies. . .There are not so many flowers in this. . .parlor? I hear Daddy's voice, a muddy conversation somewhere behind me. Smiling, I bend a little and touch my skirt (for the old lady). She winks. . .an approving nod. . . I back out of the room.

Mother is standing by the. . .bassinet?. . .now. Is she trembling or is it the air around her that seems to vibrate so? It is sadness. . .strong, in waves. It feels the way I imagine a stormy sea to be. . .all angry, at nobody in particular, but furious with the world all the same. I remember I should feel sad, too. . . and I am so guilty that I cannot approach her. . .

Tall, heavy curtains rise out of the carpet like golden rods, muffling every sound, and I wish the spongy air would drink me up too.

The smell of flowers always reminds me of Michael--not really, but always, sort of. . . .