

Exile

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The live man, out of lands and prisons,
shakes the dry pods,
probes for old wills and friendships, and the big locust-casques
Bend to the tawdry table,
Lift up their spoons to mouths, put forks in cutlets,
And make sound like the sound of voices.

— Ezra Pound

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Hands clasped together we walk the golden pathway, neither knowing what lies ahead, goals and simple hopes pulling us forward. The path narrows in the distance; blackness lies at path's end. Black for ends, or black for beginnings? The beauty of the trees around us beckons, humming songs of warmth and quiet. We stop, but only for a short while.

Three

I was sitting in my room, staring at the decorations on the walls, remembering the origin of each one. The one I remember best is from you. I tried to write a poem about it, but only came up with two lines. Here they are, anyway:

Rising sun, bursting golden gleaming
breaking across night sky

Four

Mei-tai had scarcely been gone a week, yet Chuan knew she would not return. She had seen the golden vision, just as her grandmother had predicted — and it drew her, demanded her. Its desire was tenfold that of Chuan's love — but its love was not jealous, as Chuan knew. What Chuan did not know was that the vision was golden only to his eyes. He, too, had seen it, but only Mei-tai was able to perceive its truth. In truth it was long and narrow, and, very often, lonely: it was a path of constant compromise. If he had seen

FRIEND

John Marshall

One

It was a gift, given probably because she didn't want it anymore. Tall golden pagodas tower above golden pools reflecting golden trees, shimmering in the sixty-watt light of my room, paving the way to dark pagoda entrances that reveal nothing. An antique I'm told, seventy years old; it looks much older, a relic of ancient artistic eccentricity. I hung it prominently in my room because I want her to know that I did, though she will not see it hanging there. "Burnished bronze," "must be a brass rubbing" — to be honest, I think it's obnoxious. But, she makes me like it. One day I'll take it down, perhaps, but that will be a sign of other changes.

A Photographer Documents Her Death
Chris Guessing

Death wears carpet
on its shoes and wheels, pads, rolls
with only an occasional squeak through
white rooms off bleached walls.
Fine lines run from my arm to
soft sacks hanging
off chrome hooks,
It feeds from these,
a mule from a nose bag.
My hair is falling out.
I'd been told death was dark,
my camera shows it light
and middle toned, a grey
machine humming,
witnesses behind lead.
A cure?
A last chance.

this, he would not have understood why Mei-tai had accepted its demands. He would not have seen it at all.

Five

"I can't understand you sometimes."
"What do you mean?"
"I mean, this thing about possessions and personal space."
"You're being paternalistic again."
"Ad hominem attack — a logical fallacy."
"And condescending too. Look, just shut up for a while, OK?"
"No, I want to talk about it — now."
"We don't have anything to talk about."
"I want you to have this, too."
"But isn't one of your favorites?"
"No — well, I can't get it back, anyway."
"Thanks. I'll remember this place — a lot of times here —
mostly good ones."
"We won't remember the bad ones."
"What bad ones?"
"Silly."
"Yeah — this was a good place to be in, when I was here."
"Part of it was yours too, you know."

Six

Two things could happen. One, it will be displayed for a lifetime, even if I only look at it once or twice a year. Or, it will be taken down, as the gold fades, and stored in undusted attics.



*Shirts on the line,
flopping their arms, embrace
in this April wind.*

*Watching the receding wave,
swiftly and suddenly I
move back as though on wings.*

*The thisles
are question marks this morning
facing autumn's sun.*

Should I submit a few Haiku Verses for Exile?

Eloise Haveman

It was a half hour ride on fast, bumpy roads and now she felt sick. Isabel told her mother that she shouldn't have come, that she was probably going to throw up on their plastic coated furniture. Her mother slammed the car door and bent down close to Isabel's face, then hissed through clenched teeth and stiff lips to please behave. The family entered the apartment building. The thick smell of food and people living together surrounded them as they entered the pale green foyer. Isabel began breathing out in short, loud puffs so the smell wouldn't get in her lungs. Her mother turned around slowly and glared at her. Isabel whined that

The last of her sisters was sucked lovingly through the through it. blocking the doorway. Soon she was going to have to pass himself be embraced by the bunch of fat, chattering women expressing his disappointment with someone. Then, he let shook his head at her, which was his usual silent way of being engulfed by the pudgy arms of Aunt Rose. Her father her father caught her eye and held it while her mother was of the apartment smell, but as she rounded the last landing, carefully. The familiar smell of her own hand covered some clapped her hand over her nose and mouth and inhaled Isabel couldn't keep breathing out anymore, so she words of the discussion.

about "old Nana Dear", but she could only make out a few were both frowning. Her mother was saying something parents' faces as they turned and began the next flight. They their way to the third floor. Isabel caught a glimpse of her their shoes banged madly against the walls, as they made to know what they were in for, thought Isabel. The noise of bouncing blonde heads of her sisters. They were too young parade. Her mother and father were leading the two marched on up the stairs. Isabel was the tall end of the mother called up something in a light, cheerful voice and babble fell, echoing metallicly, through the stair well. Her Somewhere above them a door opened and an excited wall. She picked one, pressed it firmly, then released it. body sharply back to face the rows of white buttons on the she was really going to throw up and anyway she should be

Morning

Melissa Simmons

Shadows yawn.
I inhale
my first breath
of moist coolness.

Veins surge, like
a river of warmed snow
carrying me
to the window's glass.

The glimpse
of a pastel dream
teases me
with feather moods.

My mind sighs
after untangling threads
linking faces, voices and rooms,
dwelling on a reticent knot,
seeking the poise
of a mobile.

Strength,
gathered from lax limbs,
the silence and darkness
of dried cups and a still pen
prime me
as with a long drawing of breath
before I dive
to embrace my reflection.

The glow of an eastern diety
nourishes me
with the still lines
of a plum blossom.

The shared warmth
of our rising bodies
like plums, now
malleable and ripe,
make me morning's
oldest lover.

Cynthia Lanning Hahn

Visiting Relatives

entrance, and it was her turn. The three women pulled her into their cluster of reaching arms. It was like being eaten or at least tasted by an octopus. They petted and stroked her hair, pinched her cheeks, kissed her forehead, encircled her wrists with their fingers, frowned, smiled, hugged and cooed her. Isabel waited. She stood perfectly straight and pretended she was in the nurses' examination room at school.

Soon the arms of the woman ushered her into another room. It was dark, and a faint smell of sickness mingled with the cigar smoke. People sat in the over-stuffed furniture. The chairs and couches had been pushed against the stained wallpaper. A half eaten display of silver bowls of puddings, platters of cold cuts and old pictured china plates lined with fancy Italian pastries was spread across a lace table cloth. The thick wooden legs of the table protruded from beneath the white lace. Isabel was given a plate and two pairs of hands were quickly transporting spoonfuls of assorted foods onto it. She held the plate straight armed and watched the pile grow. Finally, the plate was loaded to their satisfaction and the hands patted her head, pinched her cheeks, then left her. She continued holding the plate in front of her as she looked for a place to sit. Her mother was sitting primly on a couch between the two well dressed lumps of flesh known as Uncle Wilbur and Aunt Clara. Her mother was wearing her tan skirt and matching vest. It was her every other Sunday outfit. Isabel loved to touch its soft corduroy. She wanted to snuggle into a tiny circle on her lap and sleep until it was time to leave, but she knew by the way

her mother was watching her that she wasn't allowed. She scanned the room for her father. He was perched at the edge of the other couch balancing his plate on top of his knees. He took turns nodding back and forth at his plate and at the woman next to him. She kept readjusting her sitting position, pulling her dress down over her knees, and leaning closer, then further away from Isabel's father as she giggled her way through the conversation.

Her little sister, Jennifer, had found a spot in Uncle Henry's lap. He was smoking a cigar and blowing smoke rings for her. She was resting comfortably against his soft, bulging stomach, shrieking happily as she poked her finger through the rings.

Uncle Wilbur began calling something in Isabel's direction. She stared unbelievably at him. His arms were stretched out and his palms, facing upwards, kept opening and closing like a huge baby calling for his mother to pick him up. She tightened her grip on her plate and tried to ignore him. The rest of the room seemed undisturbed by him as they continued their chewing and chattering. Then, Isabel's youngest sister pranced past her and into Uncle Wilbur's immense open-armed embrace. His white cotton shirt sleeves enclosed her green-pinafores body like the giant clam she had seen in a Walt Disney movie. Isabel sat down cross-legged where she stood in front of the table. She set the plate on the floor and stared at the food. She felt someone watching her and glanced around the room. Her eyes met her mother's. They were narrowed and her lips were pressed tightly against each other again. Isabel stood

up immediately. Her mother was pointing at something underneath the table. She put her plate on top of the table and lifted the table cloth to find a small foot stool. She knelt down, pulled it out then looked up at her mother. She was wearing a tense smile as she mouthed the message to Isabel to please sit down. So she did and crossed her arms and stuck her legs straight out. The place for her heel was jumping up strangely on top of her foot since Isabel hadn't bothered to fix the one twisted leg of her tights this morning. She leaned down, tucked it underneath the strap of her patent leather pumps and glanced back at her mother. Her mother was still watching her and mouthing something else now. Eat. Isabel twisted around and slid her plate off the table behind her without standing up. Her mother shook her head and turned to Aunt Clara with a fierce smile. Aunt Clara patted her hand, laughed and resumed talking.

Directly across the room sat the frail, starting body of Nana Dear. Her hair was a transparent veil of white, and the pink of her scalp showed through the shiny curls. Isabel remembered her from her previous visits. They both had the same first name, which seemed reasonable to Isabel since they were both the oldest in their families. But Nana Dear's brothers and sisters had never seen the Bronx; they had all died over in Italy. Isabel had never talked with her because Nana Dear couldn't understand English. She used to pinch her cheek, but not in the same rough way as her aunts. Nana Dear pinched them as if she were simply squeezing them to see what Isabel felt like. The touch of the old woman's fingers against her face felt almost comforting, loose skin around her jaw and across her eye lids. Her eyes

but the sight of her veiny skin was frightening. Nana Dear seemed to have grown smaller since Isabel had seen her last. She appeared only as big as Isabel herself as she sat sunken, motionless in the paisley chair. The dark, wrinkled gap of her mouth opened and closed as if she were speaking. One hand was limply cured over the arm of the chair. Isabel watched the pale fingers moving in shaky nervous gestures independently of each other. Isabel poked at the rice ball on her plate until it fell apart and the meat and raisin center was exposed. The tomato sauce in the filling made it look bloody, so she covered it with a lump of ricotta cheese.

The old woman leaned forward in her chair and struggled to straighten herself. Her mouth twitched in exaggerated movements. No one noticed. Her sunken eyes seemed to focus on Isabel. But she couldn't be sure; they were too glazed. The embroidered pillow which had propped up her head now slipped behind her back, and she sat in a strange, arched position. Her head had fallen backwards in an odd and obviously uncomfortable angle. The dry, shrunken edges of her mouth moved excitedly, revealing its decaying insides. Isabel stood and walked through the blue-gray layer of smoke hanging in the still air. It swirled around her back as she passed through it. Her father looked up at her, quickly smiled and continued his emphatic nodding. Isabel stood looking down at the face, which was more discolored than she had realized from across the room. There were hundreds of tiny dark veins radiating upwards from the

The transference of my body
occurred on black levels.
Your death scene hidden.
Capsules of white lips
performed quiet prayers.
Your chemical hand
flicked an unseen wave
to the tears.
They stood
filling flowers by your side.
Where have you gone
by buried father?
I've dug layers to find out but
the white-wash of your minute duration
strains the holy water
of my baptism.
Kissing your stone marker
I performed a last ritual.
Finding ashes on my forehead,
I pushed away the dust
of your granite travel.

Lisa Minacci

Granite Travel

glowed a brilliant blue and her pale, freckled fingers were stretched out straight and shivering. Her palms were pressed flat against the cloth of the chair. Isabel was amazed at the strength left in Nana Dear's hands. Her mother complained that she already had arthritis in her fingers.

Her sister was still laughing at Uncle Wilbur's smoke rings, which bothered Isabel. She wanted to touch the slightly transparent skin of Nana Dear's hand, but instead she stood watching the eyes that were focused up at her. Then, the hollows of the woman's cheeks moved upwards, forcing more wrinkles around the glassiness of her staring eyes. The hand fell limp and still. Isabel reached forward and finally touched its pale blueness.



did you hear?

he's coming home again.

Bob McLaughlin

yes, i know.
 it's been one long time
 since he's been gone.
 but, yes oh yes oh yes,
 it's true.

throw open the windows,
 pull wide the shutters,
 set those kettles to boiling,
 get out the fiddle,
 and maybe see
 if we can learn
 to dance again.

you know, when it comes
 to thinking
 (always perilous)
 it seems i can recall
 this feeling
 such as shakes me
 into life again:

well, you see, i remember
 this little child
 whose eyes would glow
 oh so bold with the courage
 of simple innocence

and by God, it's a sad thing
 to reflect on how
 i forgot this child
 if forgot this fire
 that burned so fierce and joyful

but, life is kinder,
 and it's only we
 that's got to learn
 that's got to remember
 that the measure of our lives
 is what we hold clear
 in our hearts

so, he's coming home
 and so are you
 and so am i.
 and, you know,
 it's been a long time,
 since i let you hear
 me say
 i love you.

The Mud Lane

by Eloise Haveman

There was the sound of high heels clicking along the uneven brick walk.

For a moment Flora paid no attention, but anyone could have told that the sound troubled her.

Her wild brush of hair stood up disordered as Medusa locks and her small but muscular black arms struggled with the clothesline. Her children watched as in their own yard she attached her means of livelihood to a clothesline — the shirts and underwear of the genteel world.

The clicking heels drew nearer.

Wilene was passing by.

Wilene was young, as young as Flora. But Flora already had the wrinkles of age and Wilene was smooth and yellow, skinned, with cool tyranny in her full lips and a tint of red in her hair. Her crystal glass earrings swung as she walked, and her flouncing orange-and-white shirt revealed slim, shapely legs.

Flora hesitated. Then she called out, "That's tinted up red!"

But Wilene's step quickened. "You mine yo own business, woman!"

"Who's that tellin' me?"

Wilene paused. Flora was leaning toward her, over the fence.

"I'm tellin' you. You try for every man in this part of town, but you ain't gettin' my husban'. You leave my husban' lone. I'm warnin' you . . . Today."

Across the mud gray street a screen opened. Then another. Neighbors stepping on creaking porches, leaned over dirty window ledges.

Wilene moved away.

With sudden flame Flora unclicked the gate and ran after her shaking a fist.

"Trash, that's what you are! Trash! I'm the mother of four an' you best leave my husban' alone. I'm tellin' you!"

Flora turned back. She heard the laughter of the neighbors. Their mouths were opened wide. They held their sides. Then, silent and burning, she hung up the last pieces of the wash and went indoors.

In the kitchen she turned to address an invisible audience.
"I's the mother of four. I has my rights!"
She could hear their footsteps on the porches as they went in, and the grey, mud street with its row of shacks was quiet, cept fo' the yelp of dogs farther down.
Determinedly, Flora moved between the stove and the rickety table as she put pans on the stove and set the lights. Through the open doorway she could see the lights coming on in the Little Sheba Restaurant on the corner and Eddies Shine Parlor. In a few minutes Burt would be home for dinner.
Somewhere in the distance she could hear the sound of the police car siren.
Always, something happening.
Lumbering like a giant Burt came through the open door of the kitchen. He wiped his forehead with a bandanna, then gave a whistle.
"You Know? You could boil an egg on 'at road! Dinner ready?" He rolled sparkling eyes, and chucked his wife under the chin.
Flora nodded with restraint.
"Hit will be."
Burt stood meditatively in the center of the kitchen.
"Thought I'd go to choir practice tonight."
"Me too!" Flora stood defiantly with her back to the store, a saucypan half-raised. "I's goin' too. I know why you go! You gonna see some no-good woman. She one to show herself off to all th' men and I won't have her be foolin' you!"
"Goin' t' choir practice," Flora told her children and as she walked down the street they screamed their farewells her white dress with the poppy pattern.
Then she went in. She brushed her hair flat. She put on here t' look after the children."
hangin' round no Little Sheba corner tonight. You stayin' here t' look after the children."
"You girl!" she called from the yard to Tara. "You ain't looked like rain."
After he had gone, she took in her washing, because it looked like rain.
"Be home after choir practice!"
the distance, and he called back.
chair. A few minutes later his footsteps were thumping into window sill.
Finishing off his supper, Burt noisily pushed back his the tomb-like smell of dirt spiced with garbage. Down the street they could hear Crazy Maude hammering on her windowsill.
A gust of wind sweeping through the window brought in Bert went for the baked beans.
They sat down.
The children scrambled to the table.
"I've done everything to keep this table with food. An' I ain't lettin' some nocount woman spend our food money!"
Flora finished, swallowing hard.
behind the checkered table cloth.
Tara, Mundy, Oliver and Liz ran in from the street to the table and started playing hide-and-seek bumping around mine."
Tara, Mundy, Oliver and Liz ran in from the street to the way she do them!" Her voice rose quaveringly. "I hear choir practice be at Miz Mongrove's. She's a friend of mine."

"Habib," said Wilene. "My man an' ma little brother's off visitin'. Always lock my door when they go." She stood for a moment with her head poised, as though listening.

"What is it, girl?"

"I thought I heard somethin'."

"Ain't nobody 'round here."

"I feel like somebody lookin' at me."

"The devil look at you, girl. You good lookin'."

At that moment, in the street outside, there was a cry. A high, tense cry that, to Wilene's ears, sounded supernatural. Wilene peeked through the edge of the blind, then gave a scream. Burt peered over her shoulder. They could see Flora standing beneath the window, a tiny, dark fury in the moonlight. At her feet were a pile of old newspapers and a battered oil can and she was trying to light a match. She could not see the two persons behind the blind, but she was addressing the house.

"Send my husband' outta there or I burn your house down!"

Like hot sparks her words fell upon the ears beyond the blind. Her cries were likewise heard by the neighbors. Down the road half-clad figures appeared on stoops, and there were cries, muttered consultations.

In the sitting room Burt and Wilene faced each other. Wilene's coiling softness suddenly vanished.

"Go on, get outta my house!"

Burt tried to speak, and pointed at his heart.

"You heard that woman! You think I gonna have my house burn just cause you in it!"

after her and the screams of other children, playing, pierced the hot, thick air.

Flora reached Miz Mongrove's where the guests were gathered in the front yard. Miz Mongrove, large and serene, her face wreathed in smiles, was chatting with the young people.

Under the ailanthus tree in one corner of the yard stood Burt and Wilene.

"There's your wife," murmured Wilene subtly. "Better go speak t' her!"

Burt started. "She'll speak, soon enough," he said.

"I ain't 'fraid her!" countered Wilene.

"Come back here!" hissed Burt.

But Wilene strode to the gate.

"A locust hit the air with a rattling exclamation, and a chilly breeze cut the stillness of the street.

"If you come to disturb choir practice," with your rantin' an talkin'," shouted Wilene, "you just go back home."

"I came for my husband!"

"Why you want to distrub Miz Mongrove's meetin'?"

Miz Mongrove was hurrying toward them.

"I don't want no two women fightin' in my yard," she cried.

"Flora Williams, you eitha come in, peaceable, or take yo husband' home."

The young people listened, and then the night hummed with voices. 'She neglects her children to come make trouble! 'No, but I wouldn't leave my husband' neither — with Wilene."

Flora's head was in turmoil. She had a hatpin. It was stuck like a sword in the knot of her belt.

From the room where the children were asleep came the sound of a cough. Tara had been coughing. It wasn't getting better. Flora paused at the front door and then, putting down the things she had gathered, turned and went back, quietly opening the door to the children's room. She went over to Tara's cot. In faint moonlight she saw Tara turn on her back and raise her arms over her head as she gave another hoarse cough. Flora leaned down quickly to feel her forehead. Then, passing the cots of the slumbers, she picked up her things and left the house.

Pale moonlight fell on the rutted road with its stretch of shacks now without any light. Farther on Flora reached the mud lane, where the houses were sparsely set and the back yards had chicken coops. Down the lane the houses were still farther apart and dwindled to a dead end, and grimy finger reaching into the neglected countryside. At one end a dump was filled with cans and gaping automobile parts, and in the distance a fringe of factory stacks rose against a pale green sky.

Toward the end of the lane was one lighted house where the blinds were drawn. Wilene's house.

Flora stood clutching the things she had brought.

In the front room of the house, impenetrable to Flora's eyes, Wilene was locking the door for the night. Her pink jacket with a white plastic lapel flower was slung over the shabby sofa.

Burt laughed as he grabbed her arm.

"Why you lock th' door, with a man around?"

Preacher Emerson had taken her gently by the elbow.

"Won't you join our choir practice?" he urged. "Then, take your Burt home."

Flora's mind was confused by right and wrong. Should she go in, peaceable?

She looked at Burt who stood where Wilene had left him glowering under the ailanthus tree.

Then she met Wilene's eyes, and she remembered that she had a hat pin sticking in the knot of her belt.

She put her hand to it, "you better run 'way, woman."

The air was full again of protesting cries around her.

"She worse'n Crazy Maude." "She is."

Wilene turned, ran to Burt, hung on his arm.

Miz Mongrove was pushing Flora toward the gate.

"Go home t' you children, Flora Williams," Miz Mongrove said.

For a long moment Flora stood like a piece of the earth. But then, slowly, she turned and went toward the gate. All she felt was their watching her, as she went down the street and turned the corner near her house.

Silent and burning she shoved open the door, and went upstairs. Tara was sitting up in bed, terrified of the night.

"Turn 'at light off, girl!"

"Mama! I had a dream. I dreamt' —"

"Shut up!" cried Flora savagely.

An insect outside bungled through the air.

"Shut . . . up!" Flora's words crumpled and she put her head on her arms, and cried into the hotness of the evening.

In the middle of the night she awakened with a start. She was alone, and she thought of the mud lane going to Wilene's house. She got out of bed. She gathered what she

We'd met to break croissants and drink tea
The day you brought me cyclamens
From the twisted man
He'd murmured some incoherent plea and into
His chewed fingers you placed a coin
And released the bundle of wild flowers
Wound in green leaf
To cradle them, like a crippled child,
Bundled in blankets within your hand
So that when he'd passed, basket under arm,
And the rippled glass of the cafe window
Splintered his long sharp joints
Into fragments like Braque's men
You followed him with gentian eyes
Collected crumbs on the back of a finger
And put him back together again.

Ann Leopard

Le Cafe de l'Univers

"You really care for me, don' you?" flared Burt. "Sendin' me out t' cope with a woman like that. She'll send 'at firebran' in my face —"

Wilene tore at his arm with her nails, and pulled him toward the door.

Outside someone screamed, "She puttin' oil on her paper. She gonna set it on fire!"

Burt went to the doorway slowly, and opened it.

"Flora!" he said, "Here I am. what you want?"

"You come back home!"

Suddenly the silence was broken not by voices but by the shrillness of a siren a block or two away, closing in on them, piercing the air and moaning to a stop as a car turned into the opening of the lane, and drew up near the crowd. Two policemen got out of the car.

Sudden laughter came from the porch door where Wilene had appeared. "See what you get, woman, meddlin' in people's affairs?" She came down the steps and shook her fist. "This woman gonna set my house on fire!"

Burt glanced at Wilene. The expression on his face was masked. He did not look at flora. One of the officers was approaching.

Burt's voice rose suddenly, hoarse and uncertain, but everyone listened because it seemed as though he was making a speech.

"That's Flora," he was saying, and he pointed to his wife. "Flora is my only wife." Now his voice grew stronger. He did not look at Wilene. "Flora", he argued, "she wasn't doin' nothin'. We havin' street cel'bratin'. Flora she lightin'

up a bonfire."

The little crowd suddenly took the cue. They took up the argument murmuring, "That's right!" "Flora she gonna light bonfire." "She th' mother of four an' those children need her back."

Shaking their heads the officers took notes before they left.

From the porches and yards they all watched the patrol cars as it wound out of sight down the lane.

The door slammed at Wilene's house as Burt and Flora went back down the mud lane.



DAVID

Betsy Bates

Your flight aloft
leaves me

to pull the seat forward,
adjust the rear-view mirror
(which slips)

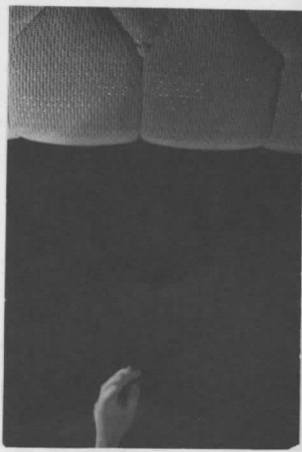
to drive back.

The pussywillow patch where we stopped
yesterday

is now an
exploded beige confusion
of seeds
and tumbleweeds.

The signs
that reminded you of
fishing lures
still promise storm doors
beer and
firewood-cheap

but the
whitewashed fruitstand has been boarded up,
probably by the
sweating woman
anticipating
winter.



John Marshall

Sand settles in my glass of tea—
crusted around the edges where my hand
gritty from waves filled with sand, the sea:

Whipped-surf pounds the beaches and pushes sand—
fragmenting shells and corals
that lived there, but die, sifted land:

Wind pulls sand-grains from higher dry shoals—
shifting them in patterns of ripples
banking against tall beach grass, in rows:

Rising from sand a crab scuttles—
indirectly seeking pools passing
to drink between the stones, he tipples:

The water is a cube of glass—
motionless and cold, beneath which brown
sand lies, in sunlight shimmering brass:

Disturbed, it rises and mixes round—
settling back slowly, sand
is crusted on the edge of my glass, a frown.

but the
whipped-surf
pounds the
beaches and
pushes sand—
fragmenting
shells and
corals
that lived
there, but
die, sifted
land:

The Last Ramona Poem (fat chance)

Lindy Davies

So I got My head in the sand?
Maybe I am just writing sappy prepoems, Pops
but you just give me some sand, you got plenty
give me a dune to burrow my head down in
make it fine, dry, and completely
opaque, OK?

instead of planning
about a home TV car job and wifekids
I keep harping sandily about
the suicidal wastefulness
all over

(what's more I spend all my free time
thinking about this fictional chick named
Ramona)

you can see the waste, right here in this building.
look at that big hole in the middle of the stairwell
— conspicuous waste of coalheated space

well

I tell ya
college is irrelevant
learning to love is fulltime, and
it's not the wasted space that wastes me:

it's the wondering about sitting up here
on this al you mini yum rail and pushing
myself off
in a sitting position
four flights hitting on my back or maybe
spinning and catching my
neck

curtains
or paralysis

curt in sore poor alley sis
. . . funny thing,

if I did
then out of all my school years
one act would stick
foremost in my consciousness

I write about in stories named Ramona?
what has all this do do with a girl
w
h
e
e
i
splat.

last anyone heard Ramona she
had left. set out for the streets:
that was rumored.
that's where the fiction starts.
you know
I never intended to prophesy her life
in stories

all the people fucked her
I dreamed I'd made SWEET love to her
but I never wrote that
into any piece of tale

AND HER NAME ISNT RAMONA BUT WHAT
DOES A NAME MEAN SHIT ANYWAY BITCH LADY
MADAME CUNT A ROSE BY ANY OTHER
THE HEART BEATS THE SAME AND FASTER
WHEN YOU
MAKE LOVE AND WHEN YOU YES YOU SHIT ASS
THUMB THRU THE LITTER
—AIRY REVIEW AND BLINK
AT AN AVANT-GARDELTY TOLD TALE OF A
CHICK NAMED
RAMONA WILL YOU KNOW HER?

quit winging it with the feelings, huh?
quit wishing all over myself, huh?
write some real poetry, huh?

if that's your definition of poetry
Mr. Artsy O'Stretch,

then you can

refrigerate Hell

before I'll ever

write you a

poem.

POEMS OF THE INCONSEQUENTIALS

Eloise Haveman

I screamed — "I am still alive!"
They said.
"Old Woman, look to the past."
"It would be like Lot's wife I would
turn to stone."
They said
"There is a chronological age,
a lessening. This country, this modern world . . .
You must look upon it
as They look upon it. It is Reality.
(I said Is it?)

"You take your place" They said,
The place they have assigned you. Oh, it is well
to be spiritual (we admire that)
and to have ideals (we love that)
but to fit into our place — that is it.
To fit. Into our place.
"What is our place?" I asked and they were silent.
But I answered in my mind . . .
A two by four place with a window looking out
upon a dirty street. No tree. No tree. No tree
and people surrounding me in corridors
in cloistered runways between stark buildings;
giving up hope they are ghosts.
There are no ideals.
There is no spirit.
And the Monitor of God (self-appointed)
said (rising up to bless me)
God give you resignation.
I said
Are you alive?
The Preacher said
It is all the same for the animal world and for us
it is just that way it is the way. Existence. Things are.
There is no way to understand. We must not ask. It is
also wonderful what the human spirit can suffer.
In concentration camps.

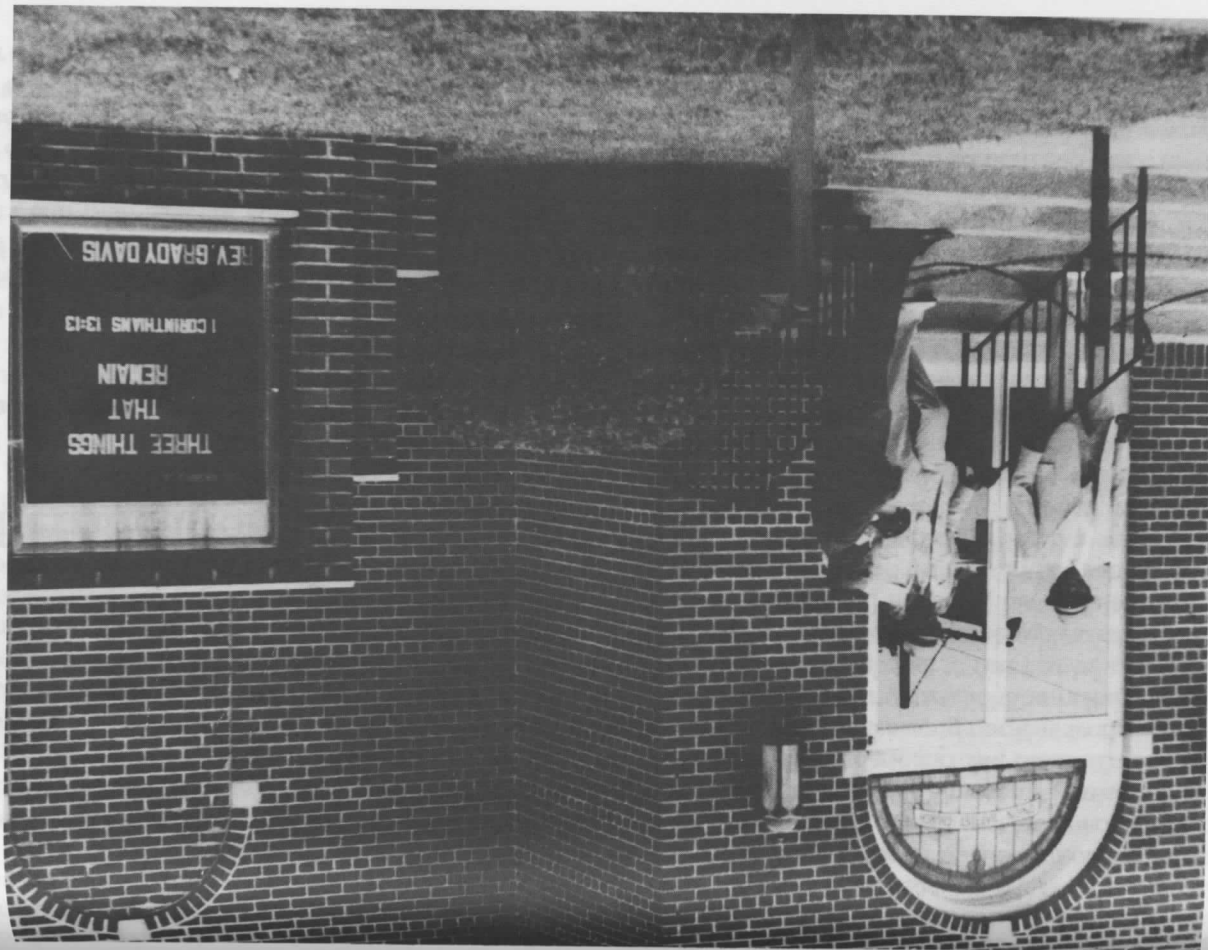
Mother Told Me Not To Play Next Door

Ellen Cox

He enjoys running stoplights
Red means "take" to him
See a woman in red, take her
See a red stoplight and take the next red car
Roll over it bend it fold it flatten the driver in red
Smile a red smile at the sight of blood
Dripping onto the grey pavement

His brother pushes people off the top
Of the National Bank in Charleston
If you stand on the sidewalk in front on Sunday
Sometimes you can see them fall
One afternoon he broke his record
And created a pile 22 bodies strong

His younger sister races horses
Across the tracks at the Detroit Motor Speedway
The near-misses excite her the most
So far she's only lost three thoroughbreds
And from that she's learned to always ride females



I said
 The human spirit is
 also capable of depth.
 Of longings for a
 silver stream that
 glistens and reflects
 The Sun.

Heaven and Hell

 Are here
 On Earth.
 To us they come as our creation.
 They are in your palm.
 They are in my hands.
 Thunder it
 Thunder it
 Thunder it.

In your palm, in my hands
 the tingling ecstasies
 the sobs, the shrieks
 the seeing of an arch across the sky
 . . . pastel
 . . . quiescent.

POEMS OF THE INCONSEQUENTIALS

Elmer Bernstein

I screamed — "I'm still alive!"
 They said,
 "Old woman, look to the past."
 "It would be the last wife I would
 turn to stone."

They said

"There's a chronological age
 a history of this country, this modern world . . .
 You must look upon it

as they look upon it. It is history."
 (I end it.)

The Petrification of a Wild Sweet William Blossom

by Melissa Simmons

I.

Hannah sat at the kitchen table with two thick ceramic bowls and a bucket of strawberries on the floor beside her. Her fingers and thumbs were black from days of twisting stems and sorting the berries, the soft ones to be jammed, the firmer ones eaten with sugar and cream or on top of corn bread. She gathered the stems into a heap with the side of her palm and took a long breath, swelling with the scent. Even after a half an hour she was not immune to their smell.

Two bangs, a grating sound and a third bang brought Hannah's eyes to the pile of kindling beside the cold iron stove. Samuel stood, legs apart, feet turned slightly out and holding a piece of wood as a man holds a cane, with one hand over the other. The diaper fastened around his narrow hips sagged at his crotch almost to his knees and was dusted with fragments of bark and ash. Hannah made little effort to deny a smile as she swung her legs to the chair's side.

"Samuel, look at yourself." She rested her thin arm on the top rung of the chair. "You just be careful now. If you get a splinter, you won't be very pleased."

Samuel pounded the stick, his smile tensing into a contortion that reddened his face and threatened tears. He sat suddenly, not having allowed for the weight of the stick. Hannah knew that the delayed outburst was more from surprise than from a sore bottom. She walked quickly to him, wiping red juice on her apron. She picked him up under the arms and arched her back to hold him, swiveling to the right and left until he was calm. She touched his cheek, wanting to feel the new hard edges emerging from smooth gums. His forehead, still gathered in pleats at the crest of his nose was short, unlike Job's or her own. From his round blue eyes about to blink a tear, she knew to continue swaying from side to side.

She slid her hand beneath his jersey and undershirt, stroking the moist heat of his back and side. How many days would he fuss, turning his head from cereal, even rippled with honey and berries, or squirm as she dressed him, rolling onto his stomach and grasping the rug to crawl away? She

was impatient to see his mouth, owl-like with cooling, spring suddenly to a wide smile boasting teeth rather than flesh. In the past few days his voice often held nasal whines and only occasionally the squeals and tongued mutterings exploring his skills.

Hannah put her son down and squatted next to him. Samuel reached a flattened palm to her angular nose. She shook her head, nuzzling her light mass of hair in his hand and then face. He held her knee, large in his hand yet small and grasped the yellow cotton of her dress. His forehead was smooth as she freed a damp wisp of hair from it and worked it in among others.

"Well Samuel, I've got to get some work done. Your papa will come in and we'll only have berries to give him for supper."

Hannah kissed his head, squeaking air between her teeth and puckered lips. She said "Poo" with more breath than voice into his fine curls and stood. Samuel, allowing her to go and disinterested in the wood, walked to the row of crocks and brown jugs along the wall. He fingered the cork of one as Hannah returned to her work.

Sitting, she curved her shoulders and pressed her forearms against her flat abdomen. The vague bloated soreness within couldn't be reached but when it grabbed upward with vein-like tightening, holding her stomach helped. Since she was fourteen she had questioned why her body ignored the cycle of the moon and fell sporadically into days of little blood but hours of hugging her knees in bed. Her mother, with large hands, fingernails out to the skin and eyes which

She nodded not trusting her voice to be steady. He found her face, ran his hand up the slant of her moist cheek.

"It's too early to mean anything isn't it?" He pulled himself up to sit and kept his hand rubbing slowly back and forth over her tight flesh. Other times he pressed his nose into her hip. She felt his breath tickle in waves, coming slow and even as his hand relaxed and fell cupped in her lap. After hours of sweat, job wiping her forehead and neck with damp cloths, Hannah wiping beads from his upper lip and squeezing his arm leaving the skin blotched with red, she secretly concluded that she would die before it ended. The midwife, Ada Chadwick, maintained a moderate, constant smile above her concentrating grey eyes. She told

took on every brown and green of a spruce tree, brought her honey tea, Hannah laughed, saying that she didn't have a sore throat, quite the opposite. Her mother patted her thigh and told her that a baby would straighten her body out. Since Samuel's birth she had felt better, her periods pestering her as coffee on an empty stomach or too many apples. They rarely kept her from throwing together molasses, oats and flour on a board, filling the house with a yeast smell or sitting to work on the braided rug which spread like a puddle, seeping under the livingroom chairs. Carry-ing and bearing a child had not been a simple treatment. She thought of the nights of awaking in bed, pushing her lips into a pout and consoling herself with full sympathy. Sometimes sitting to ease complaining muscles, she woke job. He rolled over on his side and placed a warm hand on her belly. "You alright Hannah?"

child's blue corduroy bottom and the other steadying his Samuel from sleep. He came back with one arm under the coffee to the table. She listened to Job's low voice coaxing Hannah added silverware, a pitcher of milk and one of "I see them."

She called after him. "Could you bring his pants, and socks too? It's getting cooler. They're right on the . . ."

Job walked toward the other room, his thin white shirt sagging limply over most of his belt, his socks collected around his ankles.

"Yes, but he should be getting up now if he's going to eat soon."

"Is he asleep?"

back. He gave her upper arms a light squeeze and stepped one takes a long sip of strong coffee after a bite of too-rich displacing the sweetness of the jam. She breathed deeply as smell of wood ashes, hay dust and perspiration rose to her, him leaning her forehead to meet his chin. A mild warm her and rested his hands on her shoulders. She turned to After slipping them out onto the porch, he came up behind coarse hairs of his chin. He looked at Hannah, adding a smile out of reflex and hunched over to remove his boots. traced the square line of his jaw and dripped from the short his eyelashes cling together in black star points. Drops as Job entered. Water made his darkened skin glisten and The door latch clicked open with a sharp metallic sound the pump and a gush tunneling bubbles into the bucket of water below. Steps fell heavy and hollow on the porch.

Hannah repeatedly that her hips were narrow that was all; as if Hannah wouldn't understand an answer more complex. She felt angry when Doctor Moser told her not to worry about her irregularity, angry with Mrs. Chadwick's simple answer when she wanted to know what was happening within her body; but she never mentioned it to Job or her mother.

The bucket was empty. Hannah waved flies from the two mounds of berries, chose three perfect ones and used — plates as covers. Samuel watched her approach but remained squatting, running a cork along the crack of the floor boards. She held out the berries.

"I'll trade you, berries for the cork." She took the cork from his loose grasp and wiped it on her apron as he ate the fruit. He reached for one at a time, examining each before popping it whole in his mouth. She hoisted him up and looked at his eyes with long lashes she almost envied. As he put his head on her shoulder she felt the line of his nose and warm cheek on her neck.

"Sleepy Samuel." She hummed, carrying him to the rocker crib in the living room. Samuel grabbed her hair and pouted drowsily as she laid him down. She loosened his fingers from the strands and kept his hand in hers, rubbing the back with her thumb until he closed his eyes. With her other hand, she rearranged a thin knit blanket and combed his bangs back to the left as if his hair ever submitted to a part. She wanted Job to walk in, find her like this and stand over them with his hands on the side of her neck. It was too early for him to leave the barn, the barley and corn or what ever axle or bolt occupied him. If he came, he would ask

board and set it on the table. She heard the even clanking of Hannah sliced ham and molasses bread on a chopping as if they were lava and should ignite the layer of clear wax; orange and red. Shafts of light illuminated the jars of hot jam; cleave the dense clouds, singeing the severed edges with The sun was low and managed after its day's struggle to talk about her marriage.

that her mother was not the person with whom she could Job built or the size of the farm he tends. Hannah realized the subject. She could not listen to the praises of the house Hannah straightened her dress and discreetly changed their system somehow."

hearted as they try to seem and they have to get it out of man to get frustrated now and then. Men aren't as hard is a good husband, a hard worker. You've got to expect a "Hannah, you know I wouldn't complain if I were you. Job dress aside showing the dim marks.

about it. She became gruff though when Hannah pulled her Hannah's mother listened attentively when she told her her hair.

blades rather than holding her to him, pressing his face in after he released her; as if they still pierced her shoulder shoulders and shook her. She felt the imprint of his hands thin features became harsh and rigid. He gripped her more sacred than the bare rafters. She glared at him; her down on the ground to spoil, he implied blame on something severe toward her. Once after rain forced patches of grain the drops on the roof or the window but his glance remained frustration was her fault. His words were directed toward

when supper would be ready too loudly. She would shush him, look up and ask why he hadn't washed his hands before touching her and the dress she had put on clean that day.

Hannah returned to the kitchen and put the bucket and bowls on the table by the window. A large wash basin sat one-quarter filled with water soaking mason jars. Using a square of a shirt with pocket still intact, she scrubbed the larger table. She worked gradually over the wood until the whole surface was darkened with wetness. The strawberry stains would take many washings before camouflaging in the walnut grain.

The stove was already loaded, leaving only the task of lighting and nurturing a flame, poking the slim sticks and blowing them to sparks. She set the mason jars in a cast iron pot, covering them with water, and put it on the stove. Looking over the shelves of jars, squat paper sacks and small boxes, she found chunks and paraffin and the crock of coarse beet sugar. She grabbed a long handled spoon from the wall and went to the berries. She poured sugar over them, flipping her wrist to make a snake-like trail across the red globular mass.

The sun cast weak light on her work. The shadows were as undefined as the edges of clouds in the grey-white expanse. As she stirred and watched the sugar disappear, she hoped that Job would not continue his morning complaint about the weather when he came in. She knew that the wheat was a paler green than it should be and that the barley needed sun and wind to become firm. She could lament over the weather as sincerely as he; but when he did she felt his

“Samuel isn't eating much is he?”

“No. I wish his teeth would break through and get it over with.” Hannah wiped Samuel's face and brushed his lap clean with her napkin. Job took him from her and went to the other room.

After washing and putting away the dishes, she took the basin of murky water outside. She walked around to the side of the house, sloshed water onto the grass with two heaves and slowly returned to the porch. The air of the dusk blue sky enlivened the skin of her arms like the coat of a cat filling with expectation. She flapped her apron against her thighs to shed the crumbs lodged in the weave and thought of how little Samuel had eaten. She let the basin hang from one hand and rubbed the gooseflesh of her forearm with the other. Her eyes trailed the edge of the trees to the woods. In the blackness of the trees she saw the path dodging thickets of brush, crossed by felled logs and disguised by October leaves. She saw where it opened onto another field, sloped upward invisibly over dry cut stocks and resumed in a border dividing the remains of two crops. It cut across grass, passed a small shed and led to the sturdy, even steps of Nathan's back door. She tried to prevent the images of what he was doing alone in his house now, having worked and eaten. She stepped onto the porch to refill the basin. She let the rhythmic pumping pressure the water up from the ground and the chiaroscuro picture of Nathan reading within the dome of lantern light out of her mind.

Hannah went into the livingroom where Job sat in a stuffed chair holding Samuel. She picked up the diaper he

back. He sat down at the table, Samuel leaning against his stomach and elbows and began fumbling with small feet and socks. Hannah came and squatted by his knees to help. Samuel let them maneuver his limbs but kept his attention on his tongue working to find saliva.

“He's so warm.” Job's hands held Samuel under his arms, his middle fingers meeting in the hollow of his navel.

“I know; it's because of his teeth.” She brushed the pale fuzz of eyebrows. Samuel wriggled, arching his back in an effort to stretch out of sitting. His face tightened in silent pouts. Hannah sang, bumping his feet together on the up beats and on Job's thighs on the down beat.

“Rolypoly caterpillar
into a corner crept.
Spun around himself a blanket
Then for a long time slept.
Rolypoly caterpillar,
Wakening by and by,
Found himself with wings of beauty, —
Changed to a butterfly!”¹

Hannah raised her eyes to meet Job's. His grey-green eyes had a deciduous softness to them. He caught themselves as one notices a selfconscious stranger in his vision after being lost in an unfocused stare.

Hannah brought vegetable soup to the table and sat down. She served slices of ham, bread and soup and took Samuel into her lap. Job ate with large methodical bites, chewing each thoroughly as he rested his wrist on the table and held his fork ready for use. Hannah fed Samuel and

“... and Nathan?”

Hannah forced herself to continue cutting ham into minute strips for Samuel's soup rather than letting her head snap up. Had he actually said Nathan? She bent over Samuel to watch him pulling bread apart. She collected the fragments from his pants and put them on her plate. Looking at Samuel only encouraged the image of Nathan's blue eyes, beard and the way his shoulders swayed in his long silent strides.

“You must have had a good talk last Sunday.”

“His crops are on higher ground; he was telling me.” She willed her cheeks to pale. “He said that none of it laying on the ground. It gets more wind, but not strong enough to do any harm. It's amazing how different the land can be just a few miles away.”

Job's fork and knife pierced the ham as if it were a thick slab of tough beef. “Yah, but the soil is rockier there. There's no such thing as a perfect acre. But all the land around here is pretty damn good, pretty damn fertile.”

“Thank God.”

“You go ahead on to that gathering. Samuel will escort you. It's good for him to be with other children anyway; I guess. Your mother will be there too I suppose?”

“Mm. I could bring you back a piece of Mrs. Winslow's cake. Her's is always the best.”

“Don't let your mother hear you say that. I don't think Mrs. Winslow is any competition for her.”

“Well, I'll bring you back . . .”

“Don't bother.” Job abruptly put his knife and fork on his empty plate, wiped his mouth with his hands and stood.

herself from different bowls but with the same small spoon. She broke off chunks of bread and let Samuel finger them, very little reaching his mouth. Their laps accumulated moist crumbs. Job's eyes volleyed between his plate and the window.

“It's clearing just in time for the dew.”

“Well, then it will probably be good tomorrow. At least it didn't rain today.”

“Mm. If we get sun tomorrow and the next day . . . The ground is just so damn water logged and the grain needs sun, not more rain; that's certain . . . I've got to get that fence down soon. It'll probably take another two days or so what with the milking and all.”

“You'll still have a little free time Sunday won't you? The women will be doing quite a bit of baking for the coffee after the service. You heard about it, didn't you?”

“Yes.”

“I don't know what to make; I guess something with strawberries. They never last long enough to tire of them.”

“I don't know. It depends on how the work goes. I'm not going to have the cows in that small pasture any longer than I have to. You'll go anyway I suppose; so what does it matter?”

“You don't want me to go to church?”

“I didn't say that and don't hand me your piety. You can pray and read the scriptures right here. You know that's not the only reason you go.”

Hannah pressed her lips against Samuel's head for a moment before looking up. “No, it isn't. Once in a while I

had left in a roll on the floor.

"Hannah, I think he's even hotter now."

She felt his face, his neck. "Do you think doctor Moser would come now? He's been fussing and everything but the fever only started today. I, I kept thinking he would cool down. She knelt down on one knee, holding Job for balance and stroked the nap of Samuel's neck.

"Here, take him. I'll go now. Moser will come." Job went to the kitchen. Hannah listen to him put on his shoes as she rocked Samuel on her chest. He rested his head heavily by her neck but squirmed with restlessness.

Job came to the threshold, putting one hand on the edge of each wall. "I wish you told me before that he's had this fever all day. I'll be back." The turned and walked out, his steps pounding the floor as quickly as the pounding rushed up from Hannah's chest to her head.

Samual whimpered at the slam of the door. She walked with him until he was quiet. She felt his drool and wrapped her arms to support his legs more closely to her. What was said at dinner ran through her mind seeming as painfully senseless as bringing in the wash when heaps of gathered barley lay in the fields at the breaking of a thunder storm. Other children become feverish while they teethe; but the thought failed to keep tears from traveling down her cheek, dispersing in the sweat of Samuel's scalp.

Samuel was no longer restless but kept one arm firmly around her neck, his fist gripping her dress. She sat down, laid him in her lap and wiped his face with the back side of her apron. Samuel watched her, not pouting or smiling; but

calmly looking up at her. She rocked as her voice quivered in a whispered song.

"If you were a flower
and I were a shower
Or even the dripping wet dew
I'd go to your bower
To seek you, my flower,
And there wash your
wee face for you.
Let's play you're a flower,
That I've caught in a shower
Or gathered a bowl full of dew,
That here in your bower
I've found you, my flower,
And now wash your
wee face for you."²

When Job and Doctor Moser entered, Hannah continued rocking. She heard the kitchen door, steps and muted voices. Job appeared in the doorway, anchored there by Hannah's austere glare as she held Samuel, still warm in her arms.

The field climbed sharply up from the creek then lolled in plateaus of bleached corn stalks. It stretched onward enveloping an island of young trees and underbrush covering and surrounding a small knoll, a protrusion in the level ground. Low leaning stones among the pricker bushes

¹ "The Caterpillar", Emilie Poulsson, *Songs of a Little Child's Day*, Milton Bradley Company, Springfield Mass. 1910, p.45.
² "If You Were A Flower", Emilie Poulsson, p. 105

"Samuel E. Cully
son of Job and Hannah Cully
Aged eleven months, 21 days
Died 1896"

and ragged stumps were like chameleons not shifting a tail to reveal their presence. Near the north side was a small rounded stone settled at a slant from years and weather. Matted leaves banked its base and a fine layer of moss dimmed the grooved writing.

The editors wish to thank everyone
who has contributed to this issue of Exile.

Submissions are *now* being accepted for
the Spring '79 issue. When given a voice,
use it!

