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Deaconess Home for Children

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Deaconess Home for Children

Tommy and I have our own room
in Bridger Cottage where we stay
and it's neat because we're friends.
At night when "Just-call-me-Grandma"
orders lights out,
we choke our laughter in the dark.

At recess today we watched
the girls from Glacier Cottage
slide the slide.
Tommy whispers Mary's panties.
Grandma hears our giggles
and Tommy—he's smart—he rolls
underneath the bunk and hides.
Me, I get the rubber shoe
across my butt
and when I wiggle, legs.
I bite the pillow so I can't scream,
because Tommy—he thinks I'm tough as hell.

In the mornings we form up on the landing,
march to breakfast mush,
to class at eight, to noon goulash,
to recess, and after supper,

to catechism, prayers, and bed.
Today's rain means crossing Highway 12 to the gym
where fifty years of dust pounds loose.
Tonight I have my asthma in the dark.
Grandma hears me breathe,
comes again with her medicine.