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Nurtural Selection

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Nurtural Selection

1.

The skull traveled around the classroom.
I took it, and turned my ancestor over and over
noticing the canine teeth, the snout jutting out,
the ridges over the musty caves of eye.
The dust flaked off onto my hands;
I passed her to the next desk.

2.

*With food stamps, ma'am...
Well, there was a sale on those...
No, the Cap'n Crunch
is my son's favorite—
take out the strawberries instead.*

3.

She appeared before me,
the woman who would sling her baby
to her back and gather berries for hours,
who would nurse, who would create us.
Right now she is grooming her child;
she is showing him where to find the ticks,
how to grasp them, remove them with less pain.
She holds his fingers over new skin and brings
them together, a quick movement,
then crunching in his mouth.

4.

*If you have any hints
as to the whereabouts of this man,
please call us...he was last
seen at a Dairy Queen in Estes Park,
Colorado, after which he proceeded
to the young woman's house and at gun point...*

5.

Once I had a stuffed monkey
and it would put its banana
in its mouth and I'd pull it out and
he would never win—he just wanted
that banana like nothing else
and so I just let him have it

6.

While sorting the meals, she looks for the males
every so often, scans for a break in the plains.

She lets him have some milk.

It calms her. She rises and smells rain,
the storm's front challenging her own
as the wind tangles her arms in hair.

There is a herd approaching,
throwing dust up in circles.

7.

I want both!!!

*You can't have both. Choose—Barbie or Pink Power Ranger.
Okay. I'll pick one.*

She clutched the box to her chest and the plastic
gave under her knuckles and the store was
glinting and this was where she wanted to be, until
it was time to go home and they pulled in and the
bag crinkled as her mom locked the doors.

What's for dinner, huh?

*I don't know yet, sweetie. Come on, Daddy
will be home soon. Did you clean up
your paints? You better go do that.*

8.

Well, sir, I've been working here for five years and I just thought...

9.

He is home, and they are eating.
She hands him the rock she used
to crack the shells. Berry juice
runs down her chin.

10.
*My wife can't come in
 to work today...Yeah, she's really feeling
 under the weather...I know, last week she had
 a cold—I think this is one of those
 flu viruses goin' around...she doesn't have
 a strong immune system, you know how that is...
 I'm takin' care of her
 though, don't worry...mmm hmmm...
 thanks, sir...ok...bye.*

11.
 She is helping him walk,
 holding the fists
 that will beat her
 as the tiny legs take steps;
 she is collecting nuts and
 roots and grains to fill the mouth
 that will shout that she is a useless bitch
 and as she picks him up
 he flails his legs, heels digging
 into the soft of her stomach.

—Bekah Taylor '00