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# Bedtime

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Young bodies stretching in the sun  
change skins more often than snakes.  
Last summer a mole I'd always had  
disappeared from my hand, then showed up  
same place on her,  
as though my own material  
was still becoming her.

They came to me naked:  
it's how I know them.  
I long for the weather  
that lets me see the flesh, carry it  
in my bare arms.

### BEDTIME

In separate rooms we close our books.  
The familiar siren of a teenage couple  
screaming threats from one end  
of the block to the other  
builds to a wordless wail,  
then diminishes. I wait, hoping  
the baby's rage won't follow,  
then close the windows just a bit: I'd even  
rather breathe city air than listen to it.  
As you rattle cubes in your last  
relaxing sip, I switch lights ahead of you,  
close doors according to our intricate design  
to keep the cats away from baby,  
cats and baby equidistant  
from our nuclear dining room bed.

We meet first over the crib,  
fussing in whispers about fans  
versus blankets, the chance a cold spell  
might wake her if the shouting won't.  
Finally we drop our clothes over chairs  
and enter our own bed from our own sides.  
We each tell one story we'd forgotten until then,  
or one dream from morning,  
shady without the spell of waking.  
As our daughter rustles in her crib behind the wall  
I call you "Daddy" or something silly.  
You lay a hand between my legs.  
Not for the first time I hear you softly swear:  
"It seems impossible she could have come from there."

### MOTHER'S INCURABLE WISH

Not yet three, you play in the back yard  
with an itinerant tribe of neighborhood kids  
all four and six years old, wise sisters  
you chase madly but can never catch  
until they turn sharply and you slam  
off-balance into their arms.  
Even as they call you "baby," grab  
the shovel and pail from your hands,  
you beg them to stay in the sandbox with you.

"What did she say?" they yell at me  
as I pretend to be busy with my first garden.  
But they're too impatient to listen  
to my interpretation of baby talk—  
there's a wide sidewalk out front  
and they've covered barely half the length  
of the block—they have roller skates  
and bikes and an inspirational need  
to move on. Never quiet, they burst shrieking