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Mother's Incurable Wish

Ellen Wittlinger

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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
from our gate, leaving you stricken, 
feet shoved through the fence links 
unable to follow and doubtful 
of your own desire.

“Mommy,” you must finally scream, 
“I hurt myself—here—my toe, 
my head . . .” You try to keep 
from crying as you slam into my arms. 
I hold you so tightly the new grass 
pulls back around us to look at nature. 
We lie on the ground and breathe 
together for another minute. 
I wish the world would let you love me 
always as you do right now.