

## Parental Paradox

Pitch, burlap or down?  
It matters little in the beginning.  
But as the memory emerges .....

It is an ideal childhood:  
Always sandals with the tan shorts,  
Brown oxfords and the blue blazer,  
Suntan oil and the right size mittens,  
Flannel pajamas and calamine lotion.

Always blocks with smooth corners,  
Tricycles that grow with the legs,  
A better brake for the soapbox.

Always a blue plastic pool,  
Swings in cement,  
Jungle-gyms with rubber coated bars.  
No asphalt field covered in oil slicks.

Always the vitamin capsule with cereal in winter,  
Another bite of cauliflower before pie.  
Never a hollow pit with a future.

Always father for Frankenstein in the night,  
Mother at the hot water tap with Mercurochrome.  
Never a roof enclosing a single heart beat.

Always registers for cold hands,  
Fans for Summer attics,  
Four toy boats in a warm bath.  
Never newspapers over the coil springs.

Always a falling newspaper  
When the evening toothache  
Finds its way to the living room,  
A truck axle back in the plastic slot,  
A family bed on cold Saturday mornings.  
Never a drunk door slamming  
And a mother on the kitchen floor.

It is an ideal childhood;  
It swells to a sturdy adolescence,  
To seep into a cultured adulthood.

It is a life of play and possessions,  
Puzzles and allowances,  
Leisure and libraries.  
Of enclosed attention.

It is a life of planned exposure,  
Void of extremity,  
A glass window view of the zoo aquarium  
That watches Auschwitz liberated  
And feels disgust and outrage,  
Not the whiplash of starvation.

Sometimes the nurtured adult  
Glimpses his three wheeled wagon,  
Considers touching the rough casings of life,  
Feeling the sticky stench of tar.

But such pursuits flounder  
On the sinking piles  
Of new ideal childhoods.

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