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FURROW

The

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An Only Daughter

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'And behold, there came a man named Jairus, and he was a ruler of the synagogue: and he fell down at Jesus' feet, and besought him that he would come into his house: For he had an only daughter, about twelve years of age, and she lay a dying' (Lk.8:41-12)

There was no revelry
When you arrived:
The musicians,
Encamped for hours
Outside my door,
Dispersed
Crestfallen;
Their silent pipes
Announcing
The birth of a girl.

Your whimpering
Lured me
To the crib's side
And I saw myself
Engender
Through the infant puce
Of your crumpled face:
Small fingers
Clasping and unclasping;
Your shocked brow
Still grieving
The lost paradise
Of the womb.

There followed
Eleven summers
When our house
Bloomed rich
In the seasons
Of your growing.
Love amplified

THE FURROW

Your first trivial tooth
To a milestone
Marking the journey
Into life.
Clumsy weaving
With wonder of sound
Lisped to coherence –
Joy of a first word!

Tottering anxiety
Tentatively couraged
To a first step
Bruised cries
At failed adventures!
Anointing of wounds
With healing kisses:
The last convulsive

Tremors of sobbing
Stilled in the safe
Raft of my arms.
Your recovered smile
Peeking through
Silk dark tresses
Touching my face.

So soon cocooned,
Withdrawn from me,
I waited
Respectfully,
Outside that metamorphic room
Where, by hour and glass,
In pubescent chrysalis,
You nursed the flowering
Of your womanhood.

II

I was summoned
Of an evening
To a house
Famished of joy:
My messenger's face
Drawn to a mask
For the breaking
Of doomed tidings.

Neighbours scurried
In an ominous hush
Of worried whisperings
Physicians muttering
Ambiguities,
Non-committal clichés,
Hiding their helpless art.
She lay like a wound
At my side –
Heedless to kisses
Cooling her scorched brow;
My heart contracting
To a vacuum
After grief's last breath
Had been sucked out.

I rose above the sombre
Caution of officialdom
And found myself
Pleading at his feet.

Neither scorn, derision
Nor news of her death
Deterred his entry
To that cemetery room.

She woke at his touch
And he charged us
To nourish her
As one returned
From the dispensation
Of sleep.