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Piano Lesson with A Three Year Old

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Crouched like elves on a too tall three-legged stool, 
the child and the cat both peer down into the new cave I have opened for them. 
The piano strings, the soul of this musical creature, 
are stretched against the cherrywood shell. 
The bassos, thick as twigs, stand in triplicate, 
and the treble wires--fine as the white-gold hair 
on the giggling child’s head--so thin as not to be seen. 
Promptly I let fall my open palms on the keys, 
catching maybe eighteen of them and 
sounding cacophony, as painfully loud as I can manage. 
The cat has left the lesson. 
The boy hollers in delight watching the delicate felt hammers 
percuss, setting the strings to vibrating. 
This is how it works. 
I let him lay his fingertips on the wires: 
the pulsing tickles him, the sympathetic vibration 
weaves the music into his body.

Candace Obetts  

Bedtime

"Get in bed! He's home!" 
Flaxen hair flying, startled blue eyes, 
sheets pulled up around scared faces 
exchanging familiar aching looks.

Unsteady steps, an acidic blur of words, 
each jolting syllable boiling. 
"I wasn't anywhere!" 
"I was alone!" 
"Where is dinner?" 
The clacking of plates, the friendly smell of an earlier meal.

Silverware scraping, blunt stumbles. 
Safe snores and watery sobs. 
Grim faces ease, lulled by the melody 
of Mom tidying Dad's mess.