

# Daughter

*for Zoe-Kate, age 14 months*

The guy installing our new washing machine  
 must have weighed 350 pounds,  
 his coveralls, thick thumbs, three-day stubble  
 badges of manliness I could only envy,  
 but he still went all goo-goo-ga-ga  
 over my daughter's piggy tails.

He tested every cycle  
 from cold-cold to hot-hot,  
 permanent press to delicate, then turned  
 serious and offered advice for someday  
 when she's bringing home boys:

*Do like the dad of this girl  
 I dated, put a shotgun shell on the kitchen table  
 with their name on it.  
 That'll show 'em don't touch your daughter.*

I've learned  
 when you are a father of a daughter  
 it is assumed  
 you see yourself as keeper  
 of the keys to the chastity belt.

A fool from the start,  
 at her birth I pledged  
 never to be fool enough to confuse  
 my desire for hers  
 which already has set a course toward the sun.

catching the summer's first breeze  
 to sail away like cottonwood seeds.  
 Hurrying's

her favorite thing,  
 worrying mine, following from room to room,  
 danger never farther  
 than bottom step,  
 coffee table's killer corner,  
 a wide world of things small enough to choke on.

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Watching her  
climb one exhausting stair after another.  
her eyes like blue dimes  
when she turns to check if I'm still behind her.

I wonder  
who dreams of a life untouched?  
Who would wish this on another?

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