

Waiting for Winter



Mornings on the wide gray verandah
her mother dressed them,
the air redolent with lilac and cedar.
Around the beer-dark rain barrel
from which they washed,
tiny helicopters
iridescent with turquoise wings
hovered.
The water from its amber depths
Was ice cold
and iron scented.

Mornings on the wide gray verandah
the pupas slept in their wombs,
the arachnid spun silvery threads.
In the jar on the ledge
polliwogs pirouetted
in briney foam.
Round speckled stones,
a bird's blue egg,
dry moss, a milkweed pod
gathered sun on a teatop table.

Mornings on the wide gray verandah
the adults, stout in their leisure,
gossiped of scandal,
complained of the weather.

Beyond the shimmering oatfield,
past spruce, white pine and balsam,
Lake Simcoe, glittering with diamonds,
sang in its ancient crater.

She returns to this place
between dreaming and waking
on days when the air is clear
and songbirds come to her feeder.
Silver-haired, with veins
that have known long work and sorrow,
she submits to having her brown bob combed,
laces a pair of high-topped shoes,
and heads for a field of buttercups
to wait for winter.

~Sheila Collins