

Alec Soth's Archived Blog

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Friday Poem

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Home After Three Months Away

by Robert Lowell

Gone now the baby's nurse,
a lioness who ruled the roost
and made the Mother cry.
She used to tie
gobbets of porkrind to bowknots of gauze—
three months they hung like soggy toast
on our eight foot magnolia tree,
and helped the English sparrows
weather a Boston winter. Three months, three months!
Is Richard now himself again?
Dimpled with exaltation,
my daughter holds her levee in the tub.
Our noses rub,
each of us pats a stringy lock of hair—
they tell me nothing's gone.
Though I am forty-one,
not forty now, the time I put away
was child's play. After thirteen weeks
my child still dabs her cheeks
to start me shaving. When
we dress her in her sky-blue corduroy,
she changes to a boy,
and floats my shaving brush
and washcloth in the flush...
Dearest I cannot loiter here
in lather like a polar bear.

Recuperating, I neither spin nor toil.

Three stories down below,

a choreman tends our coffin length of soil,

and seven horizontal tulips blow.

Just twelve months ago,

these flowers were pedigreed

imported Dutchmen, now no one need

distinguish them from weed.

Bushed by the late spring snow,

they cannot meet

another year's snowballing enervation.

I keep no rank nor station.

Cured, I am frizzled, stale and small.