

Dream

It was a dream
of very real proportions.
My friend's son drown
in a paper bag full of water.
I knew but did not tell her.
She was so calm when she found him,
and folded him carefully
into a paper design,
threw him to the wind,
watched him dance away,
went on dry-eyed without him.

I came in with my son
and found her dead son crawling
between the beds,
told him he was
supposed to be dead.
Put him to bed anyway —
it seemed proper, appropriate somehow,
but found another in my son's bed.
I drew him out,
this false Amaretto child,
his amber legs burbling temptingly,
and put my real son,
child of my flesh
in the bed
to die.
For it was taken up
with my friend's dead son,
and shot to the moon.

We lived in peaceful relief,
the three of us,
my friend,
my husband
and I.
For a moment.

Then came the violent roar
that tore away a wedge
of the moon,
and a flying taxi took us
from my childhood home in Denver
to Telegraph in Berkeley
where I walked with my husband
down the center
perusing the stands
of street vendors,
finding —
remarkably —
poetry, biography
of someone I loved.
Was it Mark Van Doren?
It escapes me now.
The volume I wanted
was the last
demonstration model.
They would not part with it,
but my husband bought me another
instead.

And when we came home again
shedding tears for our lost sons,
we found in our yard
a multitude of children
laughing,
singing,
rejoicing.
We were not lost after all,
but born anew.

May Cotton
Copyright 1981