

The Oldest Son Leaves for Nagoya

Jim Walker

Surprisingly tall, he looks down toward
His six-inch shorter father
And shifts his feet, anxious
For the moment of departure, awkward in uncertainty
Caught between manhood and his mother's arms
Clinging to him more as minutes slip past
Like gnats on a summer evening.

Firstborn, he seems built of putty from
The infant mold we have in picture after picture,
Grinning toothless grins, staggering first steps,
Drooling at his mother's breast.

He sketched away hours like an engineer
Designing vast projects, attracted admirers
Who forgave him his white skin. His smooth,
Long stroke smacked line drives to left and center
And his extended fingers stretched for rebounds
High above the rim.

Now from nowhere a young woman, pretty, lithe
And five-foot-ten glides to his side, reminding
Me of my own place in an endless line
Stretching past tragedies of moment
Converging towards infinity.

So we watch him after hugs and tears
And his wan wave as he ducks into the tunnel
Leading away through the night outside
Into the dark mystery of the future.

On the long drive home we speak reassuringly
Between deep chasms of silence.