

Bathing a Child

Marilyn Bushman-Carlton

Elbow-deep in shallow water
with porcelain pressed against my breast
I dragged the sudsy washcloth
over your squirming body
 your soft flesh
lost in the groan of my folded knees
 hard upon the bathroom floor.

Always you emerged
powder-fresh and dry
and finally learned to do the task alone.

Now soaking
 in effervescent solitude
as soap glides over my seasoned skin
 scrubbing my memory
I feel the supple pink you were
 like December recollection of roses.