March Children

Nancy Hanks Baird

Her head nestled in the palm of my hand not so long ago, little lips tugged my breast, fingers pink as birthday candles clutched my chin.

One night of her new life
we left her an hour
with her brother,
just twelve.
He crawled under her crib,
telephone clutched in his little-boy hand,
lay in the dark
listening to her breathe,
ready, just in case.

On this March day, she crouches in mud, fingers blue hyacinths, pinches bugs. He scatters snowballs like stars, his private, frozen Milky Way.

Children of light, sifting through clouds, leaping from the sapphire stones of heaven, your trusting eyes hold too much glory; watered jewels for wounding. With awe you hurtle down your corridors, impatient for pain.

This broken world needs your fire. Though I may soften all your grief, how dare I veil your faces?

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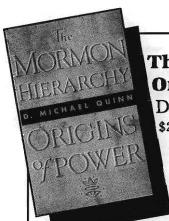
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