



Poetry by Jeredith Merrin

FAMILY REUNION

The divorced mother and her divorcing daughter. The about-to-be ex-son-in-law and the ex-husband's adopted son. The divorcing daughter's child, who is

the step-nephew of the ex-husband's adopted son. Everyone cordial: the ex-husband's second wife friendly to the first wife, warm

to the divorcing daughter's child's great-grandmother, who was herself long ago divorced. Everyone grown used to the idea of divorce.

Almost everyone has separated from the landscape of a childhood. Collections of people in cities are divorced from clean air and stars.

Toddlers in day care are parted from working parents, schoolchildren from the assumption of unbloodied daylong safety. Old people die apart

from all they've gathered over time, and in strange beds. Adults grow estranged from a God evidently divorced from History;

most are cut off from their own histories, each of which waits like a child left at day care. What if you turned back for a moment

and put your arms around yours? Yes, you might be late for work; no, your history doesn't smell sweet like a toddler's head. But look

at those small round wrists, that short-legged, comical walk. Caress your history--who else will? Promise to come back later.

Pay attention when it asks you simple questions: Where are we going? Is it scary? What happened? Can I have more now? Who is that?

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THE CICADAS

when exactly did they start
 their uncanny chirring
that moved from those trees
 to these and quieted
then rose up again in those
 waves of sound underneath which
although it was so strange
 we continued as usual
children tearing around crazy
 with end-of-day energy
adults talking over the news
 having drinks on the porch
the rising falling buzzing
 around us relentless
like insomniac thinking
 monotonous grinding
rapid wings scraping
 insistent erotic
maybe a kind of warning
 bomb fire tornado
or a lecture in a warm room
 where listeners nod off
and wake up with a start
 heads bobbing like marionettes
the strings slackening tightening
 when exactly was it over
who could understand it
 we will be tested
what do we need to know

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SHIFT

How can
I describe a conversion
like this one?

A massive shifting,
as of plates rearranging
along a continental shelf, causing

slight tremors? Maybe.
There are forces we don't see,
a subterranean geography.

Or something like a change
of season--the strange
but ordinary way trees rearrange

shape and color,
standing in the same places? Her
love was neither cure-

all nor catastrophe; not, in lieu
of the usual, a compromise. Go where you
will, do

what you can. As for me,
the scales tipped when she
touched me, just lightly.

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