

## rhythm methods & watery melodies

sour apples for pie in a basket  
plucked from a tree far from the farmhouse  
& under the tree, a blanket  
a cover in the wind, sweet solitude  
of an afternoon alone

& young joany dancing  
her dress swirling high  
both knees beautiful still  
& love in her eyes

ten years later, young still  
& ducks on the water  
the blue on their backs shining out  
from her seven little children  
through grandma joan's dark eyes  
their circles pooling  
laughter from the beach

there would be days like that, days when hearing laughter from around the kitchen table meant a game of euchre or crib & danger was as far away as the beach & the ducks & the heat.

but children can neither measure time nor distance & how could I have known that for a teen, a half hour's walk was all it'd take to reach the sand & trees that led to that welcoming beach & the warm august waters of the ottawa? how

could I have known that throughout my teens I'd spend my years sitting at the kitchen table helping grandma joan with schoolwork so different from my own? her upgrading elementary through high school & on to business college while I juggled her learning & my own? I even learned shorthand, which I promptly replaced with the sweet scent of love in my eyes.

& the sweet scent swelled with my first born, graham. walked to the hospital with my suitcase in hand – happy and excited. the hospital was french & catholic & the nuns tried to make me wear an old tin ring on the wedding finger, so I made like I couldn't understand french. but they knew I could & they called me madame this & madame that, as if that would wed me in time.

my labour was induced. the baby's head was too big, the doctor said, & I walked the halls, clinging to handles & bright lights & facing the pain on my own. nurses changed shifts three times that day before my baby was born & a nurse took him away while the sweet smell of life was as fresh as the memory of my own birth, his body my heart. I wanted to breast feed, I told her & she made like she didn't understand english & told me, go to sleep. rest. in french. & then in english brought a bottle & formula after baby was wiped down & dressed & wrapped. we had no visitors all the days we were there. I called my aunty when baby was born & went back to my bed to sleep.

it took grandma joan a long time to warm up to graham. wasn't long adoring him once she warmed up, but it was the warming up that took a while. she was bound & determined I'd do it on my own. you chose this path, she said. now live with it.

thing is, I loved my new path & live with my baby I did. a prouder mom couldn't exist & what I really wanted was to share my joy. yes, when he was born he looked like a cross between diefenbaker & mr. magoo &, yes, his head was very large, but me, I took bus rides in the city just to face him out from my belly so's old ladys could coo & caw at him. I'd sit on park benches & front steps & go down the street house by house, only later learning that's not really how things are done in the city. my boy was born while the thunder reached down from snow clouds & onto this place that was unfamiliar to us – a city. we'd grown to know one another in a quieter place.

but, there we were nonetheless & we didn't stay long in that city. I'd been at carleton, on a scholarship, culture shocked & taking math. these were the days before computers & a single mom couldn't get a student loan in ontario. could in alberta, though.

right about the time I started helping grandma joan with her homework – when I was twelve or thirteen – I learned about chinooks in school. I was

*Sharron Proulx-Turner*

both fascinated & didn't believe it for a minute. so, up we packed, me and my baby boy, & moved to calgary. wasn't there two weeks when I found I couldn't get a student loan for two years. didn't care. never looked back.

& though I longed for my homeland  
for water & bear & sand  
there's a breathlessness about the prairie  
that opened up my life  
like a basket of sweet red apples  
under a late summer tree  
the white of my hair  
against the bark of the green of the tree