

Young Entrepreneurs

The summer she was twelve she sold eggs,
ten cents apiece, roadside,
sitting four hours in the mornings, raising money for orphans.

She walked two miles to the highway
past the river, her wagon's cooler full: ice and eggs,
pearls of condensation rolling down each one.

And Wednesday nights she went to the church, watching
the fundraising thermometer rise, jar of dimes in tow. She imagined

white-eyed babies and brown children far away, naked bellies swollen,
wasting away on grains of rice –

Now this was when she still prayed to a God
living on her ceiling.

She prayed He send nourishment and thought of the girls and boys
laughing, eating hard-boiled eggs, white even to white teeth,
so bright against deep brown lips.

– this she told me, embarrassed. She stared at the floor,
I still pray for them.
The dark faces, the wide eyes eggs in sporadic, disquieting dreams.

Meanwhile I recalled visions of the Holy Spirit,
a ghost in my bedside lamp,
and how I bowed my head, asking for small thighs and new clothes.

I thought of carefully filling my own cooler with popsicles and lemonade,
and of my neighbours trailing out their doors, crowding around to buy.

While she confessed I looked at my legs, ample and hidden.
I envisioned Our Father floating near the chandelier, listening,
enterprise blessing and damning, the sun and rain on both our backs.

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