

2003

Cathedral

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Cover Page Footnote

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CATHERINE AGAR

CATHEDRAL

I see the face of Mary
 in this place,
 and Jesus on the cross,
 mahogany pews and stained glass—
 a filled-up quiet—
 fat snowflakes falling on emerald grass,
 and worship while it rains.
 The way my father washed my hands
 when I was little,
 my wedding day, all shaking nerves
 and rattling bouquet,
 three newborn babies' faces, fingers, toes,
 the rocking chair at 3 a.m.,
 our late-night, muffled laughter,
 soft music playing while the girls
 read or drive their little cars around
 the family-room rug,
 and candle-lit dinners, we two alone at the kitchen table.
 Here, too, are Thanksgivings in my steamy kitchen,
 my brothers stealing pieces from the turkey,
 sixteen of us (all here) around the lengthened table,
 and building snow forts in the dark.
 Wood smoke on an autumn day,
 the words of God printed on a page,
 and coming home.
 Coming home
 from a kick-of-leaves in the woods
 damp, pink-cheeked, and cheery,
 to hot baths and the smell of roasted chicken.
 In this place are the every night dinners;
 we listen to which crayon colors
 were used in school, and who said what to whom,
 as leftovers cool and harden on the plates,
 and the little one grows wiggly, no one minds.
 Reading quietly into my daughter's wispy hair.
 All the concerts, catching eyes,
 the little wave, the grin, the look away,
 all the card games, board games, dumb games,
 fits of giggles, laughter, tears.
 In this place is our lost baby,
 and September 11th, which still makes me cry,
 the sorrows, losses, diagnoses,
 bare root tragedies,
 all problems of the world
 we cannot fix.
 But
 there is a balm in Gilead,
 in this church, this holy place, this cathedral
 where God waits to somehow bless,
 where awe lives, where I am eight
 where I have walked in, fresh from nothing,
 where I have seen Him
 for the very first time.