

3 Poems by Adrienne Wolfert

Lost Words

They call in the night when I sleep

But I do not wake to them

My lost words

flutter in the hush of dawn,

But I cannot read them

They whisper in my brain

which cannot transcribe them

Nor can I find the scars

that bleed in my memory

which cannot hold

ninety years in one hand.

My Beautiful Papa

I curl on the lid of the toilet seat

Gazing happily up at my Papa

Who is drawing his razor like he mows the lawn

His cheeks are as rough as the sand in the sun

As he shovels away the foam

His eyes are as dark as the night coming on

The sun and the night wiggle till I laugh

He is the whole world

Last summer at Rockaway beach

he carried me bumping down to the water

bump, bump, bump

we held onto the ropes

we jumped over waves

jump jump

jumped

from his arms

into a Green Emerald

with an amazed Fish

glaring at me

I curiously examined him

Two arms grabbed me, oh Papa

as I tasted salt

You were crying

why, Papa? Nothing could hurt me
you were the strongest man in the world

we held each other tight
and I knew that no one would ever love me
purely as my beautiful Papa
and me did, then.

Beautiful Papa Was Missing

Beautiful Papa was missing,
He was missing from breakfast because he had to look for a job
He was missing for dinner because he had to work late
He was missing on Sunday because “shsh”
Mommy says “Papa is tired from work”

then I fell in love with the laundry boy and that made me feel different and I had to think about it.

No one held me on his lap and told me stories about the little man who lived in the forest. Daddy seemed darker without his bright smile.

He did not play his violin any more even though he wanted Sibby to take lessons in school for free.

I wanted to cry as they shouted at each other. That was the first time I heard anyone shout in my house.

At night Mommy and Daddy still whispered to each other.

The shadows of winter grew cold

Mommy bundled Gladys and me to out

I walked home from school with a little kid

Three o'clock was the loneliest time

The key was new to the lock

I called, "Mama! Mama! Daddy!

O, beautiful Papa!"

I was born then and knew

no one would answer.