



Womanhood

Catherine Anderson

She slides over
 the hot upholstery
 of her mother's car,
 this schoolgirl of fifteen
 who loves humming & swaying
 with the radio.
 Her entry into womanhood
 will be like all the other girls' —
 a cigarette and a joke,
 as she strides up with the rest
 to a brick factory
 where she'll sew rag rugs
 from textile strips of kelly green,
 bright red, aqua.

When she enters,
 and the millgate closes,
 final as a slap,
 there'll be silence.
 She'll see fifteen high windows
 cemented over to cut out light.
 Inside, a constant, deafening noise
 and warm air smelling of oil,
 the shifts continuing on. . .
 All day she'll guide cloth along a line
 of whirring needles, her arms & shoulders
 rocking back & forth
 with the machines —
 200 porch size rugs behind her
 before she can stop
 to reach up, like her mother,
 and pick the lint
 out of her hair.

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