

## OUR BEST FORT

could be reached  
by climbing a mulberry tree,  
leaping onto gray shingles,  
sliding to the edge of the shed roof.  
In case the bad guys arrived before Spring,  
or our mother called us before night,  
we loaded chipped plates of jelly crackers  
into a milk-box elevator  
hanging from a gnarled limb.  
We carved sassafras twigs  
and wrote coded messages with inkberries  
that purpled our hands  
for days after.

In Summer  
we sat under pine-boughs  
to plot secret treasure with  
our heart-shaped box  
brimming with play money,  
pop beads,  
and Aunt Lottie's butterscotch necklace.  
We believed forty thieves  
would have gawked at such riches,  
and we buried it countless times,  
then drew maps and puzzles  
to find it again.

Later,  
we flew to faraway lands  
on a rope swing suspended  
from a tall oak,  
or rode the seesaw as pirates  
sailing a stormy sea,  
inventing ourselves  
in kaleidoscope,  
building huts and hideouts  
like birds building nests.