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## Shelter

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# Shelter

"My Daddy won't find me here,"  
he states, monotone in his little boy voice.

The pale face stares up, a distrustful moon  
marred purple on the left temple.

I restrain my hand from smoothing the cowlick,  
from gathering the fragile frame to my heart

And get out the worn wooden blocks:  
"Help me build a castle."

He builds it as high as his thin shoulder,  
fierce concentration on the wise elfin face.

"My Mommy cries alot," he whispers, sending it  
crashing down with sad satisfaction.

Round ravenous eyes plead, defying my anger  
or punishment, as I walk past

the smoking mothers slumped at the dining-room table,  
wearily asking "what now" with their eyes.

"Are you leaving me too" the dead voice asks,  
like wind sighing against my ear.

And I turn to hug the little man, who cringes  
reflexively, remembering the pain in love.

The door slams behind me as I enter the winter sun  
outside the shelter, leaving a ghostly face staring  
back from between the sheltering bars.

– Beth Widmaier '95