



In the Care Center

Today Mother is glad to see me, seems
to know me as some childhood friend, back
at the 12th St. house grandpa built with mules
and the railroad crew in Redmond.

Remember, Mother says, that large closet room
we played all day in. The little table
and chairs, the old Havilland tea set. The German
doll, she loved, too beautiful to touch--her lace
peignoir, her flirty eyes and porcelain head, her human hair,
her stuffed cloth body, limp in the tiny chair.

Mother describes again that lava-rock wall
she skipped alone on, her father's prize roses,
the red-clay tennis court it was her job to roll,
his aviary for screeching peafowl, exotic quail,
pheasants, the pelican he took once
in trade for medicine or treatment.

Mother laughs, now telling again about those
two Pitbulls, Bridget and Cupid. How Grandpa brought
them home as pups, one in each coat pocket.
How they grew up with her, followed her everywhere
in the sage. Remember, she says, laughing,
if they were with me, Mother and Father
were never afraid. Those dogs would kill a rattler
big as your arm with one good shake.

Mother picks up my hands, now, as she
might some dear friend's or a sister's she never had, asks
how I came to Redmond, as a child in 1910
to live with them--rifling for an answer,
I admit I've never really known.

Actually, in such an antiseptic room
reminding her of home, I know exactly this:

She's still the Mother,
and I'm still the same small shirt her hands
snap empty of wind, trying to confess to her
again, I have no idea, who I think I am.

Jane Thielsen