

## LULLABY

Had I had children along the way,  
two boys, a girl, the perfect three,  
wouldn't they have played the games  
I see the children across the street play  
in the backyard and driveway of their  
parents' house: classic, old-time games,  
the games I played all day in the pebbly  
alleyway behind my parents' house:  
hopscotch, hula hoop, jump rope, and tag.

Wouldn't they have been hesitant  
to put an end to it. To come in for the  
evening and eat the meal I had cooked.  
They would not hear the words  
of our adult talk, kicking each other  
under the table, confronting the task  
of the food-filled plate before the gaze  
of the overseer. After dinner, my children,  
snapped back into the set agenda  
of adult time, would make a bid  
to postpone the increments with shared  
entertainments (better than none).

But I would only think of money,  
and time's loss. I would, having felt  
lonely all day long, long to be alone.  
High-minded and with proper stiffness  
I would send them by turns into  
the baffling isolation of their private  
rooms. They would resist, for my  
children would know that once

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in the exile of that artificial darkness  
their infantile pleas for compassion  
will be silenced by the paralyses  
of obedience and sounds loom.

But wouldn't my children be able  
to quiet their fears without me,  
focusing their attention on the  
near-to-hand—the faintly-lighted  
clock, the rumpled pattern  
of the sheet, and so on? In silent  
talk they'd learn their thoughts  
and speak to the things beside them.

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Then, fingers tapping a little charm  
to fend off nightly evils, my children  
would work quickly to lock away  
their inventory from prospective  
memory before kidnapped by sleep.