

for supper and all together too
slowly the trees in the distance were turning
to clouds. All that time I was waiting to turn

seventeen. Hand in
and hand out again. Hand
halfway between the full sack
and the ground. I remember

the message I almost forgot
I knew. I have my grandfather's word
on an acre of black dirt, my father's
on four thousand more. What
they lost is not lost. Here I am.
When I look up the future's a field for me.
I am the girl in the midst of the harvest.

Soreshin / Robert Morgan

Buying tools or implements when flush
my father asked for the highest priced.
He donated to the church then
in nothing less than hundreds, and for
weddings gave only silver.
Young beans he'd overfertilize and over-
plow, ripping out the tender roots with
a cultivator just when they should be
banked and left alone. To support his
extravagance every spring he
took out a hefty loan on the land
just like a big farmer, and ran through
it in a week or two of paying the
highest wages in the valley.
Jesus said seek first the kingdom
of God and all the rest would be added;
he meant to hold him to it.
I've seen him throw away good beans
to get a few bushels of fancies.

In small things like wire
he'd sometimes go stingy and use
any old bale, knowing when the vines
loaded with maturity both wire
and poles would break, which meant
going into the snakey thickets in
July to hack out new poles
almost too gummy to chop for
propping the toppled rows.
The fields too big to pick at once
left beans swelling to culls
in wet weather. At the end we'd
have the fun of cutting with machetes
the smut-dusty vines and pulling out
the stakes from late summer's adobe.
And where we planted beans for long
the ground itself got sneaky.
Alright in a dry year, even
through prolonged drought, but
come the least rainy spell on the
running vines and trillions of spores
revived and had at the roots. Within a week
each tap was swollen red and scaley,
dissolving in the soil, and the plants
set adrift in scalding sun would
make a last attempt to grow
a collar of white rootlets at the surface
then wilt yellow. That would be the end of
our hopes of paying back the bank that year.
Weeds immune to the subterranean
mold buried all signs of our work
with expedition, thanks to the
overfertilizing with the borrowed
cash. With only one money crop it
meant for him oddjobs and housepainting
just to pay the interest on the
privilege of wading muddy rows lugging hampers,
breathing parathion while rasped in the face
and neck by runners. His footing
on our land in ruptured shoes and
skinny knees that showed through torn
overalls was mushy and unsteady

as the shoring of his mangled rows.
He'd mow off the road banks for
miles to work off anger,
and scythe the cemetery, churchyard,
and the big pokeweeds below the hogpen.

Urn / Robert Morgan

Back in the flatwoods miles from any
road or clearing I came on this little
branch running black in the level without
a bed, just swelling rubato behind leafdams
and dropping over sticks through the woods.
And beside it a rusting chamber,
bottom loose as the lid of an old hat,
tipped over half-full of duff and moss. Who
would have brought this far from any
habitation a pisspot and left it to crack
and shed its enamel in the humanless
traffic of weather? The only action near was
the trickle-run. Had someone carried it
along to boil stolen corn, or as a pail
for ginseng root? Or might it be
the only relic of a homestead; no
cellarhole or lilacs, forest-smothered apples,
just this ruined convenience they used
cold nights and sloshed to empty
in the weeds, left salting with its rust
the ground they've already fertilized with waste
and sweat and maybe flesh. Through its
clairvoyance I look into the potted absence
at reefs of decay and soil sharks circling
in currents. This scrubbed
bucket orphaned to the open.