

# My Father Has Gone to War

*Judith Hougen*

A year's turning of knobs  
for brief, hourly news.  
Packages of Oriental dolls  
arriving in the afternoon mail  
wrapped up with stories written  
in a threatening tongue.

She'd wash, I'd dry  
poking a fistful towel  
into the single blue coffee mug  
pegging it beside the other  
dust tasting its lip.

The twist of the doorknob  
a man, a telegram, it took  
twenty minutes to  
tremble the paper apart.  
It only announced a baby somewhere  
but she cried anyway.

Her dreams snapped on, off  
like the bedroom light.  
All night in our separate rooms  
they bled on our front lawn  
the faces of men  
with astonished mouths  
shining in streetlight  
not moving  
absolutely not moving.