
POETRY | FALL 2013

Close to the Flowers: Notes from a Tanzanian Orphanage

By Woods Nash

They come from the mountain, abandoned,
swollen stomachs bulging their pastel sweaters.
Come to this orphanage, children
with AIDS, *ukimwi*, to these wooden benches
and a pale coat of paint on the concrete walls.

One baby's mother tucked her in
a plastic sack and dumped her in a latrine.
Now, strangers care for her daily,
squeeze a wash rag
over her perfect, besieged body.

Beside the window, a bouquet of roses,
peach and white, withers
in the inky water of a recycled jar.
Soon, they will die.

In the afternoon, the toddlers wander
into the yard, inspecting the dirt—
innocent, unconcerned.
The youngest girl approaches the fence,
nosing a flower that blooms
unobtrusively from a vine.
She turns aside, pollen on her lips.

Woods Nash is a lecturer in philosophy at the University of Tennessee, where he teaches bioethics and other courses in applied ethics. His research is in the medical humanities, and he has published articles on Walker Percy and Cormac McCarthy. His poems have appeared in *Journal of Medical Humanities*, *Louisville Review*, *Heartland Review*, *Journal of Progressive Human Services*, and others. His poem, "Beneath a Sycamore: Autism Revisited" also appeared in the Fall 2013 *Intima*.

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