

Baby Boy at Laundry Time

Tommie Sorrell

She just received her tassel to wear at high school graduation.
It was on the dresser between the Johnson and Johnson's
and the Marlboro Reds.

She desired to walk with the other students,
but first, she needed to locate a babysitter.

Two men, then two children;
here she is, a mother alone.

She seldom complained, even though a child herself,
and often, she reassessed her blessings.

She had a healthy daughter, now two,
and an innocent flourishing son.

Her little princess was quiet;
there was something entertaining on the tube.

She seized the opportunity and nursed,
her nipples tender and sore.

She placed his nakedness upon her grandmother's quilt.

He still fussed a little when finishing his bath.

Lovingly, she anointed him with warm lotion
and caressed him until his crying stopped.

He had his father's eyes.

She could also see her image in his face.

She speculated – where was his father?

That bastard! No time for memories.
There was much needing her attention.

An Algebra book on the table served as a coaster for two empty bottles.
Her makeup was strewn on the shelf,
rouge and mascara everywhere except on her face.
Roaches darted across the day old pizza box.
Laundry – three piles deep;
chores never ending.
Stopping for a moment, she bent down to kiss her girl.
Holding the infant camouflaged the fact she had no wedding band.
She laid him down and suddenly felt at ease.
Her daughter curled into her security.
“Mommy-noise? Mommy-noise?” Her daughter questioned.
There was a slight thud echoing from beyond the kitchen.
“It’s okay, baby, it’s just the dryer,” was her reply.

It was the officer that opened the appliance door,
Little remained – charred skin, hot flesh and a name.