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Monday, September 17 and Urn [poems]

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3. Monday, September 17 and Urn

Rella Stuart-Hunt

Raised in the South of England and the British Virgin Islands, RELLA STUART-HUNT has lived downtown near City Hall for more than thirty years. She taught art at P.S. 234, the school her children attended and where her love of teaching was nurtured, until a year and a half ago. A painter, with a B.A. in art history, an M.A. in art and art Education from Hunter College, and an interest in the Reggio Emilia philosophy of early childhood, she recently accepted a position as an atelierista and assistant director of a pre-school. For six years she has been a member of a writers group, to which she is grateful for support and encouragement.

Daisy likes playing in the dress-up area. Sometimes she pretends to cook, taking out the box of beads, pouring them into a bowl and stirring them round and round, or she will collect some of the plastic ingredients: bread, lettuce leaves, salami, and ketchup bottle, to make sandwiches.

Sometimes she plays Mommy. She will take out the baby bottle and feed the dolls. She puts them in the cradle, covers them with a little quilt, and rocks them to sleep. She has a friend, Joe, who likes to help her take care of the dolls. When she and Joe are finished, they put everything away in the closet.

Her play has changed. Daisy's mother worked at the World Trade Center. She is one of thousands missing in the attack. She is presumed dead. Our consultant psychologist and I observed Daisy today to try to help her understand what has happened, and to help her feel safe at school.

She throws the dolls out of the cradle and onto the floor and climbs in herself. Her legs hang over the end. She faces the wall, stroking a scarf that hangs down from a hook up above. Joe tries to cover her with the quilt but she sucks her thumb and pulls the scarf down onto her. She pretends to sleep, then suddenly turns, opens her eyes and looks directly at the psychologist. "Do you have a Mommy?" she asks. He is taken aback, but recovers his composure and answers, "No, not any more. I miss her. I miss her very much." This seems to satisfy Daisy. She climbs out of the cradle and goes over to the rug, and builds herself a nest out of cushions. Daisy is four.

4. Urn

Rella Stuart-Hunt

Inch deep ash up on our roof
Would wash away in rain,
But for the tragic handful
Saved in an empty salsa jar:
Tostitos, Medium Hot.
It deserved a kinder vessel.