

CONCERNING THE DISPOSITION OF PROPERTY

She thought her time had come
at sixty. She promised her son
the gate-leg table and chairs,
her daughter the soap-saver and silver,
her daughter-in-law the toilet bowl brush.
The first granddaughter was to get
her diamond ring and clothes pin bag,
the second her pearl, each grandson
a China dish, a bean pot and a bag
of nails. Then she lived for ten more years.

At seventy she promised her son
the bags of nails, her daughter the diamond,
her daughter-in-law the toilet bowl brush,
granddaughter one the table, chairs and
China, number two the soap-saver
and bean pots, her best friend the silver
and crystal, her neighbor the clothes
pin bag, her church a dollar;
and she lived another ten.
At eighty she began again.

Now I have already given my sons
straight hair, crooked teeth, a bit
of wit, the right to anger,
a strong enough sense of humor
to survive. Anything more
they'll have to fight for.

HOOKED ON RUGS

When my parents built the family home,
they selected fanciful rugs -- odd
abstractions of flora and fauna
that arced and angled into fabled fruits
and mythical beasts, and all the rooms
had to be done in mauves and grays and
beiges and duns duller than dust
against those brilliant rugs.

So my infant eyes focused on
chartreuse, cerise, magenta,
and my infant knees crawled on velvet.
Dragons set my dance step patterns, and
I daydreamed before the winter fire
sitting on fig trees and firs. I told

tall tales of wood nymphs and satyrs
that you wouldn't believe and shouldn't,
but they earned me As on my school
compositions, and in Art the teacher
looked at my novel designs, nodded
and said, "How very creative!"

Now they have sold the home, rolled up
the rugs and carted them away. But they
are woven into my bones, knitted into
my nerves and hooked into every cell.

ROCKHOOUNDING

The lower left hand
corner of a Breughel, I sit
on a rock surrounded by
broken slabs of slate, discards
from others' fossil finds.
Down the draw a mile or two
dust swirls across the dry
lake bed. Overhead a jet
too high to hear. Center stage
hammers ring on rock. Hunters circle
the mountain as others pry out
shale, lifting layers for
inch-long trilobites. To the right
wives sip coffee at camp tables
gossip and plan the next meal
while children watch parents
or play. Idly, I flip
through fragments and find
(outside the frame)
the perfect specimen.

-- Helen Hope Colgan

Carnelian Bay CA

SOCIAL

Today I walked in and took a seat at the end of the
counter and opened my newspaper and the man next to me
saw me reading about the Rams-Buccaneer game coming
up. "I'd like to see Tampa beat the Rams," he said.