

Accountable Emily

Helen Walker Jones

A muggy Sunday, windows opened onto the pine grove.
The congregation awaits soothing winds to wring moisture
From their locks. Accountable Emily, age eight,
Dreams of Gothic spires and silver domes,
Disregards the glossy white tiles with chipped corners.
She has learned of manna, Passover, the plates golden
In black earth, mysterious elevator shafts. Sabbath.
A Hebrew word. Emily presses the embossed organ pipes
On a navy blue hymnbook, wonders
If the water will be warm, imagines
Drowning. Buried in white baptismal clothes,
Her feet fading purple, pain-earned ringlets smashed
In wet strands against her neck.
Then remembrance of the Gift,
The Comforter, the Holy Ghost.
Will I be a saint? she whispers.
Her mother nods, Emily sighs, her name is called.