

# Mother

**Tana Gardner**

I didn't mind it.  
Sunday mornings were the best  
With frozen waffles, warm  
Like the gold of my mother's hair  
My feet padding down the bare stairs  
To a kitchen of mix-match pots and  
pans  
The sweet syrup and burnt edges  
Climbing to meet my nostrils  
I'd cling to her as long as I could until  
Moist lips on the forehead,  
Then she peeled me off and sent me to  
Sunday school  
To learn about the Father  
And to learn about sin

It was life. I didn't mind it.  
After school, a vacant man in front of  
a TV  
And on Fridays my mother's lips  
And Father's absence  
Till 3 am when I heard harsh voices  
and  
Shattering and the next day there  
would be  
A missing vase or frame or  
Some kind of nick-knack or ornament  
But it was alright, and I never  
missed them

Saturday Mother would look lovely  
Always in sunglasses, dark like a

cold burner  
She didn't even remove them for church  
Or movies or winter or any occasion  
And that was the way things were  
In public people would look at her  
funny  
But that didn't change her  
And she pretended not to notice  
I didn't mind that Daddy left for weeks  
Or the few unexplained cold nights  
Mother and I spent in rented rooms,  
Listening to moans like sin and death  
Through cardboard walls  
But we all sin sometimes  
At least that's what I'm told

It was life. I did what I was told  
And I didn't mind it  
Till Mother was gone.  
That Sunday there were no waffles  
And a fowl sweet smell  
Leaked from the oven  
Nauseating like burnt fingernails  
And when I questioned, Daddy got  
mad  
Said it was my fault  
Made me scrub away the black and the  
blood  
And the ashes and I didn't dare ask  
About the tangled mess of gold hair  
That clung, matted to the oven handle  
As if hanging on for dear life