

In the Kitchen They Danced

by Donna O'Shaughnessy

It was the keening violins

stirred my innocent sleep

the silvery brush of the cymbals

coupled with a piano's bright notes

which coerced my young feet

from bed convincing me to hide in the shadows

where separation, child from parent, exists.

My mother washes dishes in a housedress

of bored cotton, her apron a juice stained shield

against the days' drudgeries.

My father sets aside his paper, turns up

the radio, seeks out his bride, approaches from behind.

He unties her unwraps her swivels her

to face him, skims his palm around her waist.

Resistant at first, she pushes against
his shirt, mumbles of work to be done
small children who might wake
Gently, he cradles her weary face
his palm worn raw from laying brick.
Kisses her as quietly as the snow sliding
across the chilled windows of our third story walk up.

She succumbs to him, steps into him,
nestles her bare feet between his.

Allows him to guide her forward one-two
and backward one-two, and side-to-side slide
with a minute bend of her delicate wrist.

Swirling her under his chivalrous arm
he cradles her against his chest, keeping her dear