

Where I'm From

Diane Ferguson

I am from Larchmont, New York,
and Floyd County, Virginia—
the Big Apple and crossbred
apples from my grandmother's
sparse, Blue Ridge Mountain orchard.

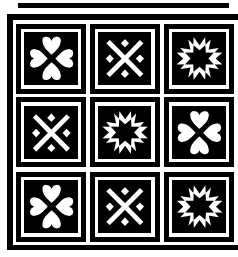
I sprang from one of my mom's
floral hatboxes. Countless
shoes and matching purses; mink.
Her closet was amazing—
mothballed, pristine, perfection.

Mom held me with ivory gloves
used to don seamless stockings
of pure silk. But I tore loudly
through her life, needing brushing,
washing, and too much fixing.

I had some broken places
and a really big mouth that
ran all by itself, leaking
secrets. I was thunderous;
my father's noisy daughter.

I sprang from Dad's moonshine still.
I am spoon bread and stream fed,
underground, a cooling brook
that keeps watermelons cold
on blistering, boiling days.

I am a kaleidoscope
of crazy quilt, patched up jeans.
I carry a small beaded bag
from New York City, and a
big mess of greens and fatback
from Floyd County, Virginia.



The Little Chick: A Children's Poem

Diane Ferguson

Busy bacon bounced on a hot burner,
Splattering heavy grease on cold metal cabinets.
Snap! Sizzle! Crackle! Snap!
Pop was cooking breakfast on our stainless steel stove.
Its open door yawned at me; its tongue had a window.
Did it think I was Gretel?

Its heat breathed on me and made me feel toasty.
February was frosty, but I was cozy in pink footed pajamas.
Pop presented a small ceramic chick;
Mamas' special knickknack,
To keep me busy like the bacon.
We played happily on the metal tray of my highchair.

Clang! Clang! Peep! Peep! Uh! Oh!
The poor little chick took a tumble and cracked wide open,
Making tiny yellow tears
On the black and white checkerboard linoleum.
My frilly aproned Mama brought a bristle broom
And a really big frown to breakfast.
She scolded me.

I felt sad for the crushed yellow chick and for me.
But all the eggs were yellow, too, after Pop broke their white shells.
He did not get into trouble.
Holding on tight to the red striped mixing bowl,
He gave their insides a beating with a furious fork.
He wiggled with the red salt and pepper shakers
To make me giggle.

Scrambling the eggs in a big, black, iron skillet
With a thick wooden spoon, Pop whistled a tune: "E-I-E-I-O."
He scraped fluffy yellow clouds onto my Peter Rabbit plate.
"Watch out, Little Chick, these are hot!"
I made the clouds disappear into my hungry tummy.
Freeing me from the greasy tray, Pop washed my
Resistant face and fat, sticky fingers
Softly, with a scratchy linen kitchen towel.
He used warm water to wash me.
My tummy was happy, and so was I.

"Little Chick, come here." he said.
I climbed up on his lap.
We sat in the squeaky rocking chair under the window,
And met a sunbeam. We read the funnies in the paper
At the red, Formica table; and he made me laugh.
Pop was my very special friend.