

POEM

Tonio: Telling Time

What did he already know, straddling his mother's broad lap,
 hiding his face, listening at our halting and stuttering and murmuring babble,
 the nonsensical sounds of statistics and 'choices' rushing like noise,
 perplexing his parents past their own understanding,
 shifting from one leg to the other, unfathomed,
 watching the waters well up around him, then spill,

Of the future, for the first time foreseen,
 far from the red-and-blue striped swingsets
 and the ants and the pebbles at the playground,
 far from the bright candy wrappers at the deli,
 and his mother's silken neck, where he loved to rub his hot cheek?

Tonio turned, eyes wide, cried and clung a while,
 his tears obscuring the flood of our own fears.
 Slowly the quietness of the small room returned.
 He had spied the box of silly, tattered toys;
 he wanted them, right now, endearing just for the present,
 silent of their own irrelevant past.

Ron Louie

Correspondence to Dr Ron Louie, Department of Pediatrics, University of Washington School of Medicine, 4800 Sand Point Way NE, Seattle, Washington 98195-6340, US; ronlouie@blarg.net

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