

My Papa's Waltz

**The whiskey on your breath
Could make a small boy dizzy;
But I hung on like death:
Such waltzing was not easy.**

**We romped until the pans
Slid from the kitchen shelf;
My mother's countenance
Could not unfrown itself.**

**The hand that held my wrist
Was battered on one knuckle;
At every step you missed
My right ear scraped a buckle.**

**You beat time on my head
With a palm caked hard by dirt,
Then waltzed me off to bed
Still clinging to your shirt.**

Theodore Roethke