

## ON THE HEELS OF WONDER

My curious eyes fixate  
on her nurturing hands  
as she moves from plot to plot  
tending her prize flowerbeds

Her words are encouraging  
and her touch, gentle  
yet her treatment of invaders is fierce  
garden harmony is the prime desire

She is in paradise  
and I, right there with her  
we absorb the aesthetic allure  
of our companion life forms

### *the Fuchsias*

nestled comfortably under the eaves  
of our California Craftsman home  
beside the back porch steps  
purple and red blossoms dangle  
from bulbous pods that burst  
into miniature clarinets  
Mother drives her finger into the soil  
showing me how to check for moisture

### *the Cypress Paper Reeds*

bunched at their base  
they stand tall against the chain link fence  
lean stalks sway back and forth  
in the slightest of breezes  
their heads, stringy-haired fireworks  
rustle like the sound of a snare drum lightly swished  
Mother lets me help her prop a stick  
against one that has fallen over

### *the Lemon Tree*

smooth yellow ovals year after year  
tart and sweet at once  
the key — she eyes and knows  
where and when to cut back

to produce plump and juicy fruit  
and leave the crown's majesty in check  
Mother shows me which branches to prune  
and tells me when lemons are ripe for picking

### *the Roses*

a delight to our noses  
we inhale the fragrant scents  
of red and yellow heirloom blooms  
we snip stems for bouquets  
but are careful to treat them with respect  
or suffer the consequences — ouch!  
Mother teaches me how to thin out the bushes  
so they will keep flowering spring through fall

### *the Succulents*

on the sunniest side of the yard  
echeveria, stonecrop,  
hens and chicks, agave  
fleshy and taught-skinned  
some having teeth  
their flowers appear only briefly  
Mother explains how to remove and  
transplant offsets when growth gets too dense

My little head swells  
with flora acuity  
while my heart bathes in  
earthly compassion

I walk in her wise footsteps  
and learn to speak in her sacred tongue  
that only she and God  
and the greenery understand

Many moons later as I tend my plants  
I muse Mother's wondrous lessons  
and I thank her for the green thumbs  
she graciously gifted to me

*by* Deborah LeFalle