
SUFFOCATION

BY MARILYN K. MOODY

I.

at the funeral, the bank manager softly said, come see me,
he gave her a teller job, he saved her, but she didn't know
that then, she had that job for thirty years, how else would
she possibly been able to survive, four little kids,
back then, when women didn't have jobs, stuck in that awful
little prairie town, she was Catholic, but why did she have so many?

her husband was a foolish man, he was obscenely happy,
he left it to her to figure out how they could live on his
farmhand wages, he was a hard worker, he wasn't a drinker,
but after they married, she realized he would always be like a kid,
another kid for her to take care of, she would have to make plans,
it made her become harsh and brittle and a nag and a worrier.

they guessed he lived about three minutes, as the thousands
of bushels of corn came down upon him, enough time to feel
the weight of grain pushing against his chest, to feel his heart
beating so so fast, to feel the dusty corn all around him, to feel

the unbearable pain of so so much grain against his twisted neck;
did he suffocate, did his heart explode, or did his neck break first?

II.

one of his daughters couldn't remember him much,
but she liked to tell
how her father would come home dusty and dirty,
with candy bars
he bought at the grain elevator
in his pockets
for the kids,
she liked to tell
how once, it was so so hot, the air
so so still you couldn't breathe,
she liked to tell
how her father couldn't bear for the kids to suffer,
she liked to tell
how he went to town,
she liked to tell
how he used the
very last of his money,
she liked to tell
to buy the kids an electric fan.