

## Edith of No Special Place

I'm just plain Edith.  
I'm number four,  
and should anyone care,  
I'm eleven years old,  
with curly black hair.

Squeezed / between / two / brothers,  
Daniel and Ray,  
lost in a crowd,  
will I ever be more  
than just plain Edith,  
who's number four?

In my overcrowded family  
I'm just another face.  
I'm just plain Edith  
of no special place.

## Always One More

I saw these wooden nesting dolls in a store,  
the kind where you don't know how many dolls  
there are altogether until you start  
opening them up,  
and there's always  
one more inside,  
sort of like  
my family.

## Family Portrait, Baltimore, 1936

We're lined up:

girl boy, girl boy, girl boy, girl boy, girl boy,

and in the middle of us all, Dad,

who ordered us to smile

right before the Brownie clicked,

standing stiff as a soldier,

no smile on *his* face,

and Mom's beside him,

a baby in her arms

and in her rounded belly

another one,

just a trace.

## Inspector Bubby

When Mom goes to the hospital  
to have this new baby,  
us older kids  
watch the younger ones  
and keep the house clean.

We think we're doing okay  
until Dad's mother, Bubby Anne,  
comes over  
and runs her finger across the top  
of the china cabinet  
that we couldn't even reach,  
  
just to show us the dust  
we've left behind.

## There Goes That Theory

Nobody asked *my* opinion  
about having another sister or brother.  
But if someone had,

I would have asked  
for another little sister,  
even though I was sure

this new baby  
in Mom's belly  
had to be a boy.

How could I be so sure?  
Because the last girl she had  
was my sister Annette.

Sometime after Annette came along,  
Mom collapsed  
and Dad rushed her to the hospital,  
where they took out one of her ovaries  
(part of her baby-making equipment,  
Bubby Anne told us).

So my sisters and I thought  
it must have been  
the girl-making one

because since the surgery  
Mom has had nothing but boys —  
my brothers Lenny, Melvin, Sol, and Jack.

But now this baby in Mom's belly  
turned out to be Sherry.  
And that's the end  
of our ovary theory.