

Daystar

Rita Dove

Rita Dove was born in 1952 in Ohio. She was the first African-American Poet Laureate of the United States and has taught at Arizona State University and University of Virginia. Much of Dove's poetry concentrates on African-American experiences and family dynamics. Her most well known poetry collection, *Thomas and Beulah*, is based on Dove's grandparents' lives in the South. While Dove certainly is concerned with African-American history, she is even more concerned with humanity in general; thus, as one reads "Daystar," the reader can easily recognize and relate to elements of family life, regardless of ethnicity.

—Jessica Isaacs

She wanted a little room for thinking:
but she saw diapers steaming on the line,
a doll slumped behind the door.

So she lugged a chair behind the garage
to sit out the children's naps. 5

Sometimes there were things to watch—
the pinched armor of a vanished cricket,
a floating maple leaf. Other days
she stared until she was assured
when she closed her eyes 10
she'd see only her own vivid blood.

She had an hour, at best, before Liza appeared
pouting from the top of the stairs.
And just *what* was mother doing
out back with the field mice? Why, 15

building a palace. Later
that night when Thomas rolled over and
lurched into her, she would open her eyes
and think of the place that was hers
for an hour—where 20
she was nothing,
pure nothing, in the middle of the day.

Source: Reprinted from *Thomas and Beulah* (1986).