

**MARILYN NELSON**

**Called Up**

**Blue Checked Cotton Dress with Smocked Bodice and White Peter Pan Collar  
(Cleveland, Ohio, 1951)**

Folding the letter and laying it down,  
Daddy says Well, Baby, I've been called back up.  
Mama pauses, then puts my bowl of beans  
in front of me. Jennifer eats and hums,  
across from me on two telephone books.  
Mama says Pray God you won't see combat.  
Jennifer, stop singing at the table,  
I hiss. Her humming's driving me crazy.  
She looks up from her bowl with dreaming eyes:  
Huh? Mama says My Darling, we're going too.  
Stop singing! I'll take a leave from law school,  
he says. And you'll take a leave from your job.  
We've been called up. Our leaves become feathers.  
With wings we wave goodbye to our cousins.