

TUBERCULOSIS THIEF

Playing
On the aspen floors by
Grandma's hearth, memories
drifted of her mama's warmth.

Listening to
the talking box
She heard her mama's voice.

She probed the nylon mesh
poked and shooked the voice box
calling Mama, Mama
Pekīwe, pekīwe.

Hands gripped on the knobs of
the lying box,
she bowed her curly head while
the talking spirits drifted
and took her mama away.

Grandma's hand stroked her
soaking cheeks while
the child of sapling height
thought her mama dead.
The tuberculosis thief
hid in her mama's lungs
and buried her
three years
behind the sanatorium walls.

—Louise Bernice Halfe
Bear Bones & Feathers

