My Papa's Waltz

The whiskey on your breath Could make a small boy dizzy; But I hung on like death: Such waltzing was not easy.

We romped until the pans Slid from the kitchen shelf; My mother's countenance Could not unfrown itself.

The hand that held my wrist Was battered on one knuckle; At every step you missed My right ear scraped a buckle.

You beat time on my head With a palm caked hard by dirt, Then waltzed me off to bed Still clinging to your shirt.