Castles in the Air

Mary Lutes*
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Abstract

MY VERY own. Tracy let the sand sift through her tiny toes as she shoveled more sand into her tin pail. A castle in the sandbox. It was to be just like she wanted it, maybe even better than the one in the Cinderella picture book.
MY very own. Tracy let the sand sift through her tiny toes as she shoveled more sand into her tin pail. *A castle in the sandbox*. It was to be just like she wanted it, maybe even better than the one in the Cinderella picture book.

The square box with its striped awning was beside the hedges in the backyard. Butterflies fluttered over the gold and yellow hedge flowers, attracted by the blossoms bright colors and sweet scent. Because of this activity Tracy had always called them butterfly bushes. The sun peeked in spots through holes in the roof canvas as Tracy played. Mounds of pearly sand, tightly enclosed by the wooden box, were depressed by footprints and shovel marks of other children. Now there was no one around but Tracy. The sand was all hers to create with. Her black eyes sparkled as the six-year-old imagined this fancy castle-to-be.

The pail wobbled as Tracy stirred the sand. With the water in the pail the dissolving sand appeared marbled. *More sand*. Grabbing a handful, she trickled the grains in hourglass fashion. *Just right*. To make a level ground, Tracy stretched her forearm and smoothed the mounds. She wiped the loose grains onto her pink playsuit; then she knelt to construct her castle. The cemented sand thudded when Tracy dumped the pail. The flat shovel became her first chisel when she sculptured her ideal. She molded the spires, her hands feeling pasted with clay. The towers seemed to be trying to break through the clouds of a painting. With her fingertips Tracy outlined windows and a door by brushing excess grains away. *Almost perfect*. Smiling to herself, she rose up to survey her castle and her feet touched the sides of the hard wooden box. The gritty sand tumbled from its
lodgings on her knees and in the folds of her playsuit. *Trees.* Tracy reached over and pinched two sprigs of the butterfly bush to set outside the castle door.

“Hi, Tracy, what you doing?” yelled Billy, slamming the back screen door.

“Look, Billy, come and see my castle. I made it all by myself,” Tracy called happily while bending over to plant the trees.

Billy ran to the sandbox to look at Tracy's creation. He scrambled around the sides critically examining all views.

“See the castle towers. Here's the window and the door,” said Tracy pointing out the fancy touches to Billy.

Billy, summoning up the wisdom of two years more experience, broke in, “Castles don't have doors, Tracy. They have drawbridges.”

Tracy turned her back on the castle. The weakening sand bottom had dried out and the sandcastle crumbled as she climbed out of the sandbox.

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**Prelude**

*by Ann Baumann*

*Child Development, Soph.*

Bare branches reach upward
in silent symphony of grace
to web ashen sky
with delicate pattern

and I, friend of trees
lover of browned, smudged, thawing earth
believer in eternal
rising of orange-paled sun