



**Naomi Long Madgett,  
1923–**

Naomi Long Madgett, a native of Norfolk, Virginia, born July 5, 1923, earned a B.A. from Virginia State University (1945), an M.Ed. from Wayne State University (1955), and a Ph.D. from the Institute for Advanced Studies (1980). She was raised in New Jersey, Missouri, and New York, and since 1946 has lived in Detroit, where she worked in the forties and fifties as a reporter and later as a teacher in the public schools. A poet and publisher (Lotus Press), she is the author of the poetry collection *Remembrance of Spring* (1993) and nine other books.

## Woman with Flower

I wouldn't coax the plant if I were you.  
Such watchful nurturing may do it harm.  
Let the soil rest from so much digging  
And wait until it's dry before you water it.  
The leaf's inclined to find its own direction;  
Give it a chance to seek the sunlight for itself.

Much growth is stunted by too careful prodding,  
Too eager tenderness.  
The things we love we have to learn to leave alone.

## Offspring

I tried to tell her:  
    This way the twig is bent.  
    Born of my trunk and strengthened by my roots,  
    You must stretch newgrown branches  
    Closer to the sun  
    Than I can reach.  
I wanted to say:  
    Extend my self to that far atmosphere  
    Only my dreams allow.

But the twig broke,  
And yesterday I saw her  
Walking down an unfamiliar street,  
    Feet confident,  
    Face slanted upward toward a threatening sky,  
And  
    She was smiling  
And she was  
Her very free,  
Her very individual,  
Unpliable  
Own.

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