

First Words



Miriam Manglani

She stands in front of her pretend kitchen,
looks up at me with her large eyes, holds
her pretend spoon— *spatchelula!*

I picture a dancing spatula
with flowing skirt,
multicolored leis, face
with big red lips, and
lashes as long as hers.

He plays with his fire engine,
its wheels grind playground dirt —

furdenden

I imagine a furry animal
clomping on cylinder shaped legs
muttering “den den”
with its cavernous mouth.

She points to the vacuum cleaner,
says

Gaboon

I picture a baboon with long
vacuuming snout, steam
teaming from his nostrils,
making an “umm ummm” sound

He used to say *beba*
Years later, I still don’t know what it means
but it always made him smile.

I miss their baby words sprouting
with imaginary meanings, their tiny
voices bursting with intense
emotions so much larger than them.

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