

Prodigal bipolar

by [Marjorie Maddox](#) in the [March 13, 2019](#) issue

Rebellion's a ribbon to wear in her bright, black hair  
while she dances the jig with the neighbor's squealing pigs  
and three convict sons. No one ever shakes a head and says,  
"Girls will be girls." Not one. Not to the fretting parents who wring  
their own necks in worry, who sing their own dirge to the sound  
of strokes and stress. Not to the twirling deserter. Sex, the great  
distinguisher, the great bearer of expectations, the great deceiver of grief  
also confesses, "A child will be a child," but even here finds no relief  
in equality, the agreed-upon diagnoses trampled in the mud  
of some faraway farm while they wait, bruised ears to the ground,  
for resounding footsteps that do not come, and do not come again,  
the oxen rotted on the spit, the spoiled and rancid stinking up their now-  
mortgaged estate in its own slaughtered, gender-neutral, bloody-bad way.