

Helen

The doctor can't prescribe a cure for Helen.
He says there isn't much we can do
except feed her only white food
like vanilla ice-cream and rice
because she says the devil is in colored food
and keep scissors and knives away
so she won't cut things
like her hair and dresses
and move the mirrors out of the room
so she won't cry because she is old.
She calls for her mother
like a lost child.
She won't eat the mashed potatoes I try to feed her.
She bites my hand and licks her dentures.
She wants my new flowered dress for her own.
 I'm not to tell she wets the bed
 and wears diapers
 and screams in the night.
 I should be nice
 but I can't stand her
 and she won't die
 like her mother did.
 I'm keeping my dress
 and fixing tomato soup for dinner.

— *Suzanne Farley*