*My Papa's Waltz*

by Theodore Roethke

The whiskey on your breath   
Could make a small boy dizzy;   
But I hung on like death:   
Such waltzing was not easy.   
  
We romped until the pans   
Slid from the kitchen shelf;   
My mother's countenance   
Could not unfrown itself.   
  
The hand that held my wrist   
Was battered on one knuckle;   
At every step you missed   
My right ear scraped a buckle.   
  
You beat time on my head   
With a palm caked hard by dirt,   
Then waltzed me off to bed   
Still clinging to your shirt.