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Cover Art

Artist's Statement: The Orphans

My painting *The Orphans* honors baby Cephas, an AIDS orphan in Zambia, Africa. He was taken to a clinic because of severe dehydration secondary to gastroenteritis. Overnight, Cephas's peripheral IV catheter fell out, and since there was not another catheter in the clinic, he received no further fluids. Cephas died the next day.

In the painting, the orphans stand in a Kitwe cemetery holding their sheet metal “gravestones.” A sea of red earth mounds representing the graves of children dead from AIDS surrounds them. For the same reason I painted *The Orphans* I wrote the poem “Baby Cephas” to remind us that poverty-stricken orphans die every day.

Baby Cephas

Rain pounded the earth his funeral day
As women huddling under a torn
Umbrella wailed a Bemban dirge, broken
By thunder that cracked like the black pastor's
Fist banging his thick Bible as he knelt down
Over baby Cephas's small pine box
Asking God if the pouring rain was Him
Crying over all the dying orphans
Piling up under the earth? *Then we should
Build another ark because the tears are
Going to flood this land.* The rain ceased and
Light rays glowed through the purple clouds
That gleamed down on baby Cephas's grave.

The rasp of the gravedigger's shovel jabbed
The damp air as we trudged away. The thud
Of wet earth dumped onto the wood casket
Echoed like a drum as we plodded through pools
Of red sludge. The thick mud stuck to our shoes
Clinging to us like orphans who begged us
Not to leave them alone again.



The Orphans

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