Mama, Who's Mr. Roosevelt

Amy Crandall
MAMA, WHO'S MR. ROOSEVELT?

Mama and Daddy are out in the barn milking the cows. Big, warm black-and-white shapes makin' funny noises all the time, even when they crunch their feed. I tiptoe over to the radio, click the big knob and instantly "Stella Dallas" comes into our living room. High, lady voices like Aunt Hannah's and low, men voices like Granddad Harp's echo through the first floor off the floors and ceilings, the stove, the ice box and Mama's pots and pans. I ain't supposed to have the radio on, or even touch it, Daddy said, so I keep it kinda low. All of a sudden the voices are gone, replaced by static and another man's voice talkin' fast.

"Ladies and gentlemen, we interrupt this program for a special news report. WQZF has just gotten word that Franklin Delano Roosevelt, the thirty-second president of the United States, has died of a cerebral hemorrhage. . ."

Continued
Roosevelt?
Mama and Papa knew him.
They always talked about him
at the dinner table.
Maybe he was their friend.
Anyways,
they'd want to know what I heard.
I ran out of the house.
The screen door sounded like a rifle shot
as it slammed after me.
The path to the barn was muddy
from yesterday's rain
and I slipped and fell.
My white knee socks were bunched
around my ankles and my legs
were streaked with mud.
Boy,
would I catch it when Mama saw me.

She and Daddy were talking
when I burst into the barn.
They looked at me,
surprised and alarmed.
I breathed in the sweet hay smell
as they asked me if the house was on fire
or if Baby was sick.
I repeated the radio man's words.
Daddy just sat on the milking stool
and covered his face with his hands.
Tears rolled down Mama's cheeks
as she took my hand to walk back up
to the house.
I grabbed her apron.
"Mama, who's Mr. Roosevelt?"

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