

comedy of inter-generational conflict. Childish play with shared sparklers, roman candles, and bottle-rockets result in injury—a clubhouse “vanished into embers” and frowns “embossed themselves on brows.” The fun soon ends when one mother, “nurse to a perpetual plummy funk,” calls in the fire-truck.

Witek describes the origins of her “How-To” poems as something started “purely mutinously” after reading an old Girl Scout Handbook from Goodwill. “How impossible most of the instructions were—and are still—off book,” she observes, “for girls becoming women ... I figured I might as well try to give whoever comes this way next more useful tasks.” In Witek’s unique and richly evocative vision, the dual roles mother and artist achieve a balanced counterpoint.

—Jane Satterfield