

Barbara Sigman

Waiting for Ryan Kimberly

You helped the big bad Sosa kids
throw shoes up to the telephone wire
so we woke in the morning
and saw them there,
gym shoes hanging stupid and lonely,
swaying in the wind,
staying there
forever.

You wrote Led Zep on the STOP sign
at the bus stop
before I knew what it meant,
you lit firecrackers in the dead of night
and I jumped under the covers, heart racing.
You rode a noisy motorbike,
zooming past in a flash,
you were the one they all hated, jealous:
“Ryan Kimberly plays hooky!”

I loved you and wanted to be you
both at once: if I could be tuff
like Ryan Kimberly,
if I could be your girl,
Michael wouldn't try to kiss me anymore,
Teddy wouldn't chase me on the playground.

You never hung with our crowd:
too many wide-eyed children,
no juvie-hall punks on our block.
But one day you sauntered
up my driveway, alone and quiet,
no firecrackers or threats.
You shook your bowl-haircut,
took my forearm in your large hand
and traced lines on my palm.
A swimming pool, you said,
a big house and a handsome man.
You smiled at me, you didn't treat me
like a little girl.

You were right about
the swimming pool, the house,
but not the handsome man.
I'm still waiting for someone
to write me a crazy kind of love
letter: gym shoes gracefully
hung in the sky, so high
they stay there forever.

Everything

changes and shifts
in perspective
with you,
three days at the week's end
distorted, curved like a scythe.
Straight lines vanish; you slice
wedges of time like cake,
serving sporadically but
giving me the marzipan.
Everything changes:
landscapes erase themselves
and re-form,
autumn winds blowing away
dirt so mountains glisten,
soil wet-black sprouting
new grass, sun lighting yellow
leaves' bellies and backs.
I skip, giddy
from drinking
this freshness. In
my own belly, I feel
quickening: you're in me
without consummation,
lending me grace
under pressure, com-
passion and
smiles for strangers.
Everything changes:
Sunday stands still

and forbidding, dark boulder
I strain against
without moving, making
three days askew: curved
like a scythe with the weight
pulling upward. If I stand
on tiptoe I cannot reach
the peak of that day when
I'll see you. I sleep
in the scythe's cradle,
waiting for you
to wake me with a kiss
and lift me from that
glinting blade's danger