

SUSAN MILLMAN

MARY ANN HEIMAN

She's a friend of someone
who works in my office and
what I know is this:
fifteen years ago she had a date
with a man I've started to see.
Since then, she's heard his name
and that he married and divorced,
had kids and raised them by himself,
and she's encountered him occasionally
over cabbage at the all-nite grocery store.
They had a 'nice time,' she remembers,
slight jolt of familiarity,
the electric comfort of a blanket,
and yet they hugged only once
and said goodbye.
Now this man who hugged her once
and said goodby has
startled my reflexes:
he lives in a big house with red Spanish tiles
and a dog on the side,
and kid and a nephew who have their own rooms...
I went to visit and the house sucked me in,
(I guess my anti-stabilizing shield was down)
through the hall of yellow umbrella photos
taken by his daughter,
past the giant's kitchen table
holding coffee cups of mottled gray
each encircled by a strident color
to ensure no drinking from the other person's cup,
past the washer stacked with kid clothes
into the living room blue couch which
had no lamp beside it because it was
just for looking out the window
into the sparkling city.
There we sat getting high and talking
our words spinning out and touching
mingling and repelling until

we had a square of cloth between us
and when it grew lacy,
I knew I had to go.
He walked me to my car.
I wanted to say I like you,
you're really special but
as he came toward me
arms open like his house,
my shield shot up and
all I could do was scream
SUSAN MILLMAN!
He hugged me once
and was gone.