NORTHRIDGE REVIEW

SPRING
1991

Northridge Review
Spring 1991

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Northridge Review invites submissions continuously between September and May. Manuscripts should be accompanied by a cover page that includes the author's name, address, telephone number, as well as the titles of the works submitted. *The author's name should not appear on the manuscript itself.* Please limit submissions to three short stories and/or five poems. Photography and graphics are to be in black and white, and there is no limit to the quantity of these submissions. Manuscripts and all other correspondence should be sent to: *Northridge Review*, Department of English, California State University, Northridge, California 91330. Manuscripts will not be returned unless accompanied by a self-addressed stamped envelope.

Faculty Advisor
Dorothy Barresi

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Awards

Two awards are given annually in recognition of the finest works published in the Spring and Fall issues of *Northridge Review*.

The **Helen Helms Marcus Award**, established by Helen Marcus, recognizes the best short story published by a CSUN student. The winner of this award receives two hundred dollars.

The **Rachel Sherwood Award**, given in memory of Rachel Sherwood, recognizes the best poem published by *Northridge Review*. The winner receives fifty dollars from the University and will be acknowledged alongside the name of Rachel Sherwood.

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Poetry and Fiction

Kathrin Breitt

Stella Does Feet

Stella does feet. This is how she makes her living: prepares warm, soapy water of the right temperature; gently washes and scrubs skin until pink; pares down unsightly callouses; pats feet dry with thick, white towels; snips and files cuticles and nails; and applies polish to ten various toes. Some client's feet are a twisted torture of skewered nails, thick callouses, and swollen ankles. These women—and they are always women—tend towards oversized dresses and nail polishes with a pink hue. Good feet, solid, workable ones, often come to Stella. Usually they walk in with nurses, waitresses, and salesclerks. The best feet of all are perfection in themselves, and Stella rarely sees these.

She finds them easy to envision. Long straight toes, the second one just a bit longer than the biggest; high arches, without the distraction of ropey veins; and slim, never skinny, ankles, all leading to strong shapely calves. These feet are inevitably well-shoed in Italian leather and are what Stella aspires to.

Preferences, the salon where Stella does feet, isn't often graced with such perfection. Usually she works on odoriferous and skewered toes with dense callouses. Routinely, Stella cares for the feet of mid-aged matrons in polyester slacks who tip poorly. Or night-club girls who squeeze their feet into tightly fitting, high-

heeled shoes and fail to understand why their toes are bent at odd angles. They too tip poorly.

Tips are important to Stella. At home she has a four-year-old with a club foot who must be fitted with orthopedic shoes. This child will never wear Italian leather shoes nor desire her toes to be painted Dashing Red or Catch-Me-If-You-Can Pink. When a perfectly matched pair comes in, their pristine elegance thrills Stella. They make her aspire to great things: running, jumping, dancing, skipping. For a moment she can forget about the bulky shoes and twisted toes that dominate her life.

One Tuesday, a client came in without an appointment and asked to have Stella do her feet.

"Please, I need my toes done," she said to the receptionist. "I have a date and need them done. Now. Please." Stella hadn't ever seen this woman before. She could only imagine the Tuesday date which required perfect toes. She was between feet at the moment, as it were, and was happy to tend to these.

She ran the water until hot but not scalding and added just enough soap; the client removed first her shoes and then her stockings. Stella noted that she wore stockings, not pantyhose and that her shoes were rich red T-straps with shockingly high heels. Stella startled when she saw her client's feet. They were by far the most beautiful Stella had ever seen. Sure there were such perfect feet in a few of the trade magazines, but they were only pictures. Overcome with anticipation, she was careful not to add too many suds to the water. Too many suds would make a foot oily and too slick to grasp.

The client carefully tested the water with a large, perfect toe and then plunged both feet straight in. "Ahhhh, just perfect."

Stella went to work rubbing smooth the few rough spots and cleaning the nails with a brush. Before drying, she let the client sit a bit longer in the water to soften the cuticles for easy trimming. Stella tried to think of something to say but was at a loss for words.

She used two towels, one for each foot. Tenderly patting each foot, she was struck by their muted color and lack of prominent veins. The client herself remained obscured by the beauty of her feet. She submitted to Stella's ministry. Stella envied a woman with so much to offer.

The feel of the foot in her hand reminded Stella of other successes in her life; her client list, her vast collection of polishes, her acceptance at the salon. As she manipulated the foot, small, quiet bones popped and snapped into place. The client made little sounds but didn't speak. When tugging on each toe she released the tension of those high heels. She lingered when she came to rubbing lotion along the arch and around the ankle. The ankle was slender, but not skinny. She squirted more lotion into her palm and warmed it before continuing. Slowly she worked past the ankle to the calf.

Nearing completion, she asked the client her preference of color.

She stated simply, "Red."

Stella was pleased. The skin tone of this foot was well suited to Just Red. A color she had been saving for the perfect foot.

While coloring the toes, Stella wished to confide in this woman about her club-foot child and her own desire to paint only the best toes. The woman, however, did not invite conversation.

Upon leaving, the client noticed the photograph of Stella's child on her cabinet. In this photograph, her foot was well-concealed. She dropped five dollars on the tray and paid cash at the door. Stella didn't learn her name nor was she able to wish her fun that evening on her date.

During the weeks that followed, Stella often thought about the client. One Friday, after having had Thursday free to take her child to the clinic, she learned that the same client had returned and asked for Stella to do her feet. Learning that Stella was out for the day and declining to make an appointment for the next day, she again left five dollars on Stella's tray even though she had done nothing to earn it.

The girls at *Preferences* were dumb-founded, as was Stella.

"What 'ya think she did that for?" asked the hair dresser who preferred working with blonde curly hair.

"Must have been good for her," said another, the one who preferred straight dark hair.

Stella looked carefully at the five dollar bill, turning it over to look at the back as if she would find a clue about this mysterious client.

"Think she'll be back?" asked Stella.

"Really, she didn't say," said the receptionist who made the appointments and sold the special, high-priced shampoos and conditioners.

"Her face is a dream," said the make-up specialist, "That skin tone."

At that point, the owner came in from the back room, a heavy-set man with a neatly trimmed grey beard, "Girls," he said, "Everything okay in here."

His preference was a quiet and elegant salon. He thought gossip amongst the workers made the clients uneasy; like the girls would talk about them just as soon as they paid their bills and walked out.

For the longest time it was silent except for Stella's thoughts. Who was this woman? From where had she come? Would she be back? Had someone sent her? Had her child's doctor, knowing Stella was dependent on her tips, suggested to his wife to frequent the salon whenever she was shopping downtown? Had this woman seen Stella and her child, clumsy in heavy shoes and with an awkward gait, somewhere? Shopping for groceries in the market, in the park but unable to play with the other children?

It was another week until the client returned, again without an appointment and asking for Stella to do her feet. Stella was not free right then. But she could see and over-hear the conversation from her booth near the back of the salon. In another twenty minutes she would be finished painting the thick, yellow toe-nails Touch-Me Pink, a color that contradicted the demeanor of her heavy-set client. Fervently, she hoped the receptionist would persuade the woman to wait.

"I'm sorry, I don't have time," she said to the receptionist. "Please, take care of this, will you." She placed another five-dollar bill on the counter.

And quietly she slipped out the door. Almost, it seemed, without opening it.

The receptionist sauntered back to Stella with the five. "Look," she said, "Another."

"Give it to me," Stella said, with as much anger as she ever felt. "Why didn't you ask her if she wanted an appointment?"

"Sorry, dear, slipped right out of my mind when she left that five."

In ten more minutes, much less than it should have taken, Stella completed the crumpled toes she was working on. The polish was sloppily applied and clumps of polish grazed the cuticles and even the skin above the nails at the tips of the toes. This woman, however, found it difficult to see over her belly and wasn't aware of the inferior job. After paying the receptionist, she came back and left a dollar on Stella's tray.

"Thanks, dear." She said, "See you in a couple of weeks."

She did not reply, it was not this heavy-set woman she wished to see again. Stella jumped up and bolted to the door. On the sidewalk, she looked up and down the block, hoping to see the woman gazing in a store window or coming out of some shop. The streets were full, but empty of the sight Stella wanted.

"Damn," she said and looked up and down the street again. "Damn."

Inside the door, the owner stood with his arms akimbo and a stern bent to his mouth. Stella's actions were not the image he wished his salon to portray.

"Stella."

"Sorry," she said. "I forgot."

She returned to her booth and picked up the latest Ten to Go, the trade magazine of choice amongst pedicurists. She leafed through the pages hoping to console herself with pictures of perfect feet. They left her lacking; she longed for real feet: their texture, their color, their straight, even toes.

Another week passed. Stella's work had become messy and her manner condescending to her regular clients who returned with their fallen arches, pungent odor, thick callouses and bent toes. The owner watched her carefully, pedicurists were a dime a dozen. Replacing Stella would not be hard.

At home, Stella was quick-tempered when she used to always be even-tempered with her child. She demanded they go on long,

strenuous walks, through parks, around shopping malls, down-town, up-town, wherever Stella thought she might see the client. These walks were hard on her child, the limp became more evident and often near the end of these walks, the child would cry and beg to be carried. Once home, Stella no longer massaged and tended to her child's feet as she formerly had done.

Finally, one Thursday morning, the client returned. Stella was free; she nearly tipped over her stool when the door opened and the woman stepped through.

From a back room, the manager watched Stella and shook his head sadly and silently.

"I've only a few minutes," the client said. "Are you able to do them quickly?"

Stella consented.

The other girls watched Stella do the client's feet. The blonde, curly-hair preferring hairdresser, whispered to the others, "She's back," she said, "Do you see? She's back."

"Shh," said the dark-straight hair preferring one, "Don't you see, he's watching."

Stella fluttered about nervously. From the sink while filling her basin with water, she asked a little too loudly, "Do I know you from somewhere? Have I seen you before, besides here I mean."

"No, I doubt it." She said this quietly, while removing her shoes and stockings.

Quickly Stella turned from the sink with the basin of water. It splashed messily over the rim. From the back, the owner's grey beard wagged.

Without testing the water, the client plunged her feet in and then immediately pulled them out.

"Oh!" She said, "That's much too hot."

"Sorry," Stella said, "I'm sorry, really."

While they waited a moment for the water to cool, Stella gathered three white, fluffy towels from the cupboard. She spread one across her lap and then set to doing the feet. She scrubbed the rough spots, but perhaps a bit too hard. When she brushed the nails, the brush slipped out of her hand and skittered across the tiled floor.

With vigor, she dried the feet, causing them to turn a bright red. With the nail-clippers, she nicked the cuticle and a spot of blood appeared. Quickly, she patted the spot with a white towel. The red blood was in stark contrast with the towel and it was evident what she had done.

When it came to massaging the feet and ankles—Stella hoped she would have time to do the calves too—she used a little too much lotion and the feet were too slick to grasp. Her hands kept slipping and one time she nearly dropped a foot.

When she started sliding up the calf, the client said, "Oh, no, please. I don't have enough time for that. Just polish now, please."

Stella picked up the Just Red bottle.

"No, that's much, much too red. Let's just use a pink this time."

Stella had no color called Just Pink, so she chose a shade called Nearly Pink. She could barely tell the difference between the woman's skin and the color of the polish. Several times she had to neaten up smears with a Q-tip.

Stella's forehead glistened with the strain of aiming for perfection and failing as she knew she was. She felt the same way when the doctor had told her that her child had a club foot. The client sat still for a few moments. Stella picked up a sleek black pump. The low-cut toe of the shoe would show just a smidgen of toe-cleavage and be very alluring.

"Please, I'll put that back on now."

"No!" she said more abruptly than she intended. "I mean, I think you should wait another moment, for the polish to dry."

"Really, I am in a great hurry."

Reluctantly, Stella relinquished the shoe to its owner, but not before sniffing the barely perceptible odor. Even that intrigued Stella.

From the back, the owner's gray-beard grazed back and forth across his chest with vigor. Really, something needed to be done about this.

At the front counter the client paid the receptionist and Stella sat slumped in her stool, feeling very foolish. After a moment, she felt a touch on her shoulder. The client was holding out a ten-dollar bill.

"Thank you," she said and paused. "I'm sorry, I won't be able to return."

Stella started, unable to voice her thoughts in words, but gestured frantically with her arms.

Again, the client slipped through the door, as if without opening it.

In the back room, the owner looked through a stack of applications and resumes he regularly received.

Soon after, a scheduled client came in. Stella methodically and carefully did her feet. She neither noticed nor cared about their imperfections; she administered to them as carefully as any feet she had ever done before.

Scott Sandler

Miss California
Plays Around In Earthquakes

1. Run to the t.v. and there's former Miss U.S.A.
now doing the morning broadcast.
Carefully explains to you why your windows shake
and why the tonka truck hits you square in the head.
Tells you this with grace like she's got A-Z balanced on her head.
Tells you this like it's the talent portion of her act:
swinging hips and finger cymbals.
Says there was a time when all of this might've surprised her.
Says there was a time a long time ago.
Says when I was wee-high.
Before I entered Carpenter Elementary.
Before I entered Miss Junior Miss.

2. Takes us live to the schoolyard where jungle gyms are pretzels.
Ballbox has burst open and red rubber balls, basketballs,
and tether balls roll around her legs like seaweed.
She says, as you can see it's not safe.
Not safe to walk out your own door.
She says, as you can see it's not safe
and gets hit with the pointy end of a football.
Checks her nose in the compact and says, still smilin' pretty.
She says, back to you in the studio.

3. She says, do you believe in God.
The one that gave you a racing heart and me long legs,
pretty face to boot.
The God that, in seeing that you didn't finish your homework,
cancelled classes.
Do you believe?
Cause I tell you, the whole of San Fernando Valley is acting up
like a rickety, old washer and dryer, bouncing us around,
moving furniture.
Do you believe?
I'm just curious is all.
When they said, Miss California, whom do you most admire,
I said God. Do you remember that?
Will you vouch for me?
That wasn't all just fluff y'know.

Fractions

Gail drinks half our whiskey.
She says, "I am three-fourths buffalo,
one-fourth the woman I pretend to be:
I am an indefinite term."

I drink the other half,
lie down, three-fourths asleep
behind Gail's knees,
falling asleep, lovely, sweaty, sweet
knees which I pack into my lungs
one hundred percent.

She says the buffalo want to bring me back
into the fold,
to make me one of their whole numbers.
She says, "My averages are better with the buffalo," &
snaps a dragonfly out of the sky.

I say, "The world is three-fourths water,
one-fourth Gail.
Will you deprive me of one whole quarter?"
I say, "The sun will come up tomorrow and will
completely restore you to that Gail I once took you for
when the moon was low and full of muscle."

Gail takes off her Levis, hands over keys &
says, "As a buffalo, I won't be needing these."
She says, "Send my regards." She says, "My love is divisible
by two and I can only choose one."
She waits for a fraction of a blessing &
gets none.

Dusk

Flying insects infiltrate blue dusk,
speed toward dark shapes of buffalo,
humped, low to the ground shapes,
cooling in mud shapes.
Flying insects burrow in thick buffalo hair,
soak on buffalo blood and hook
electrodes up to big buffalo chest.
Flying insects with their tweezers,
glass slides, plastic bags.
What information will they gather for their superiors
regarding the sacred buffalo, the power buffalo,
the buffalos who keep their true identities hidden
between belly and sluggish mud, their true plans
rolled and corked on their forehead, in a mass of
bone?

Eve E. M. Wood

I Cannot

I cannot promise very much.
A shell or a finger,
a pigeon's cheek pressed into the earth.

Across from me two women touch like children in an unlit room.
I am beginning to think you have died.
I am beginning to wonder.

I cannot promise very much,
a single stone dislodged from a house,
a strip of iron,
a piece of hair.

I wait for the flower I gave you to break.
I wait for you to wonder.

I cannot promise anything,
a wooden wedge,
a linen cloth,
a door.

Lie Still With Me

1.

Lie still with me and watch.
The ocean is not yet done with itself,
reformulating mounds of dark sand
and discarded fish on the shore.
Your hair molds to your face
like the skin of the flounder folds over small bones.
You will not let yourself fall.

2.

Stay still with me and watch.
Soon I will ask you to swim out and meet me,
arms deeply linked,
faces alive to the water
so no words are needed.

3.

Lie still with me and wait.
I am a child without a face,
beguiled by your spirit
like a stain of blood that will not wash out.
I have doubled my efforts to lose you
or love so strongly, I go under,
forgetting how to breathe.

4.

Together, we own the long day's sea,
pushing you back up on deck,
pulling me out like a stone.

5.

Lie still with me and listen.
I know certain pauses in the waves where the world is silent.
Bodies are wrinkled, bleached with foam.

6.

Lie still with me and watch.
I will find you,
sunk in a carriage of light on the shore.

Lorraine M. Lopez

A Bicycle With A Bell

Janira saw the bicycle with a bell for the first time in a shop in town. She traced its gleaming blue haunches and sparkling chrome trim with eager fingers. The tires were fat, their tread pure and sharply imprinted with a zig-zagging pattern. The shiny handlebars dipped stylishly at the center and red and white ribbons dripped from each black rubber grip. The factory smells of oil and new plastic lingered seductively in Janira's nostrils long after Popi pulled her away to purchase some garden tools.

"Popi," she began, as they left the shop. "What would I have to do to get a bicycle?"

"You don't want a bicycle," the big man muttered, absently, shifting the packages in his arms. "Bicycles are dangerous. Goddamn, I think they overcharged me for this hose."

"Didn't you have a bicycle when you were a boy?" Janira tried again.

"A bicycle?" Popi's broad face softened in a gentle smile. "I had an old black bicycle my mama bought off a soldier. And I had a blue parrot named Hugo that rode on the handlebars. All day long, I rode around town with that parrot on the bike. He liked to go fast and he wasn't afraid of nothing. Everybody used to look at us. 'There goes that boy with the parrot,' they used to say."

"But, Popi," Janira persisted. "How old were you when you had the bicycle?"

"But he was a brave parrot. He never learned one word, but, man, he loved that bike."

"Popi, please, how old were you when you had your bicycle?"

"I was too young to know any better. I broke my arm in two places riding through the cemetery at night. Hugo used to like bouncing over the graves." Popi's smile sagged. "My mama wouldn't let me ride the bike for a long time after that. I guess Hugo got bored because one day he just flew away. My cousin told me later she'd seen him in San Salvador riding on a motorcycle."

"What happened to the bicycle?" Janira wanted to know.

"Some men took it away from me," Popi said, simply. "They pushed me off and they took my bike away."

"Why did they do that?"

"Who knows why they do things like that? C'mon let's go back. This hose was supposed to be half-price." When they got back to the shop, Popi argued with the shopkeeper while Janira stealthily crept back to the blue bicycle. On an impulse, she squeezed a rubber grip and, to her astonishment and deep pleasure, it bleated softly. The bicycle had a bell.

Mama scolded the washerwoman vehemently as she bundled the week's laundry into four blue sheets which she tied with a firm knot. The washerwoman, an old Indian, hung her head, nodding in mild agreement and clucking her tongue in dismay over her shortcomings. But her ancient corrugated cheeks only partially concealed traces of a feral grin and her narrow eyes, deep in their nest of wrinkles, glowed with dark amusement.

"If you weren't so lazy," Mama was saying, when Janira skipped out onto the porch, "and careless, I would trust you with the curtains. But that last load you brought looked like you dragged it through the town."

"Ay!" the washerwoman cried and clucked her tongue several times more.

Janira waited, twisting a soft brown braid with her finger. She watched her mother handling the bulky wash with swift, efficient movements. Her small dark hands darted like clever sparrows against the pale sky colored linen. Mama, practical and sensible, would at once see the necessity of a bicycle.

"I don't know why I give you work. You never do it properly." Mama tied the last bundle with a deft tug.

"Mama," Janira suggested, "wouldn't it be a good thing if I could go and get things for you from the store whenever you needed?"

"*Por Dios, hija*, it's too far." She poured a handful of bright coins into the old woman's outstretched palm. "Perhaps if you did your work properly, old woman, that jackass husband of yours wouldn't be sitting in the jail drunk every night." Though the washerwoman failed to make a connection between her inability to do proper work and her husband's drunkenness, she nodded more vigorously than before.

"It wouldn't be so far if I rode a bike," Janira continued.

"What wouldn't be so far?" Mama puzzled.

"Well, the store, Mama."

"What do you want from the store?"

"I don't want anything from the store!" Janira cried in exasperation.

"Then why do you want to go?" Mama stared at her daughter in wonder.

"For you. For you. I'll get things for you."

"I don't want anything from the store. Why don't you get the broom and sweep out the front room, if you want to help?" Mama shoved the bundles toward the old woman.

The washerwoman slowly hoisted the bundles into her cart and pulled the cart across the road. When she had trundled the cart far enough away, she hastily unknotted the sheets and rummaged through the soiled clothes for the sack of eggs, the sweet rolls, and the four mangoes that Mama had hidden along with a terra cotta donkey for her grandson.

Popi sat, swinging gently, in his rope hammock. He sipped green tea and fanned himself with a banana leaf. His bare feet dangled over the thick grass so that the long blades could tickle his toes.

"She wants a bicycle," he heard his wife say in the darkness behind him.

"I know it." He had a fleeting vision of Janira, thin and small, wobbling on a large black bicycle at the edge of town. She turned to wave once and rode bumpily into the darkest part of the jungle.

"Well." His wife's low voice was in his ear now and he felt her breath on his neck. Then she placed her warm hands on his bare shoulders. Sparrows to roost. He pulled her around into his lap. They swayed silently in the knotted sling, listening to the dogs barking sporadically in a neighbor's yard.

"She's too young," he said, at last. "It's dangerous."

"It's more dangerous," she hesitated, "what you're doing."

"One more year, Elva, I promise."

"That body in the dump. You knew him?"

"She could break an arm or a leg so easily."

"Those bombs last week, in the church, in the post office. You knew those people, too."

"She doesn't even know how to ride a bicycle," he muttered.

"She could learn. You learned. Why don't we get her a bicycle before we leave this place. It will be hard for her and this way she'll have something in the new place." She stroked her husband's rough cheeks with her fingertips.

"In two years, maybe, when she's fifteen."

Now the dogs snarled fiercely and flung themselves at the chain fence. Soon they heard voices and feet shuffling in the dirt road. Some men called out for Popi. He jumped out of the hammock and leaned against the fence talking with them. Their voices were low and earnest. They spoke for a long time, while Mama lay alone in the hammock pinching her eyes closed.

"Popi, how could I earn some money?" Janira asked in the morning as he drank his thick black coffee from a thimble-sized glass.

"Well, we could get you a cart to collect laundry like the Indian woman," he said, thoughtfully. "But you'd have to quit school."

"And marry a drunk," Mama added, irrelevantly.

"Or, I believe, they're hiring men at the plantation. How are you with a machete?"

"Popi, really. I want to earn some money."

"When I was a girl," Mama recalled. "I made paper flowers to sell at the *fiestas*. I made hundreds of them, pink, yellow, orange and I tied them on green wire stems. The night before the *fiestas*,

I filled my bed with them. I had to sleep on the floor. When the sun came up, I screamed like a little monkey. It looked like my bed was on fire."

"I could pull up the weeds in the garden," Janira offered.

"It took the whole day, but I sold every flower. My pockets were full of coins. I was going to buy raffle tickets to win the convertible. I bought twenty tickets." Mama shook her head in disgust. "But the mayor won the car."

"I could pull them up every day and you could pay me once a week."

"And the next year, he won the vacation in Mexico, too," Mama continued.

"And the next year he was shot," Popi added.

"Why won't you listen to me?" Janira blurted. "I need to earn some money to buy a bicycle!"

"What do you want with a bicycle?" Popi asked.

"I could ride it up and down the big hill. I could go to the store whenever you needed anything. And I could visit Isabel and Marta in town whenever I wanted. I would park it in the rack at school and lock it with a chain." Janira stared into her bowl as if she could see herself, tiny and unfettered, riding across its porcelain base. "I could go anywhere I wanted."

"No, Janira," Popi said, softly. "Not here. You couldn't do that here."

"Popi, you had a bicycle," Janira accused.

"And they took it away from me."

"*Hija*, we want to get you a bicycle," Mama soothed. "But not now."

"You're too young, now." Popi shook his head.

"When can I have one then?"

"Maybe in a few years."

"When you are fifteen," Popi promised. "Then you can have a bicycle."

Popi pushed away his coffee and slammed out the door to work. Mama cleared away the breakfast dishes. And Janira folded her arms over the table, resting her forehead on the stiff tablecloth, so that no one could see her hot, angry tears.

There were times when Janira felt convinced her parents would buy the bicycle before her fifteenth year. Usually these times were deep into the nights before holidays and birthdays. She'd lie in her small bed beneath a plaster crucifix, squeeze her eyes closed, and concentrate with an unfamiliar ferocity. "If I hold my breath and count to one hundred, if I say the rosary three times and then once backwards, if I cross my fingers all night long," she'd say to herself. "In the morning, when I wake up, it will be there in the front room." She could nearly see it glinting in the morning light slanting through the big window like a new coin winking at the sun.

On her birthday, she raced out of her room to rouse her parents, but they seemed oddly shamefaced and saddened by her exuberance.

"Come on! Get up! Get up!" she cried, pulling Popi's arm. "It's a happy day!"

"Calm down, little goat," her father grumbled, pulling sheets over his head.

Mama got out of bed, briskly. She had chickens to peel, chiles to stuff, and a large white cake to ice for the guests. All day, Janira stumbled after her mother, hovering like a large blowfly, Mama kept batting away. She spilled sugar on the floor, broke a plate in the sink, and caught a braid in the egg batter. Finally, Mama called to Popi in the front room, where he sat reading the papers.

"Take this child out for a walk," Mama urged. "So I can get something done."

"But I want to help you, Mama." Janira felt stung. "It's my birthday. I want to help."

"You can help me by going with Popi to get some red candies to decorate the cake," Mama told her, gently.

Popi folded the newspapers, put his arm in hers, like a gentleman escorting a lady, and led her out the door. They had not walked very far, when a one-legged man in a fatigue jacket called out to Popi. Popi and Janira crossed the road to speak with him.

"When will it be?" Popi's glance swept the dusty road.

"Tonight, I think," the man answered. His pant leg was neatly folded over his stump and fastened with a safety pin. Janira cast her eyes away with a pang.

"I'll be there," Popi said.

The strange man smiled suddenly and fingered Janira's braid. "Is this your little one?"

"No," Popi told him, abruptly, leading Janira away.

"Popi, who was that man?" Janira asked. "What happened to his leg? Why did you tell him that about me?" But Popi withdrew his arm from hers, jammed his fists into his pockets, and would not answer her.

When they returned to the house, Janira found that Mama had festooned the entry way with blue and yellow balloons in an arc like a rainbow. Janira whooped with pleasure until she stepped into the front room. A wicker chair near the window held a long department store box wrapped in red foil. Popi grabbed the box and thrust it, wordlessly, at Janira. She swallowed hard, pulled apart the white ribbon. A pink dress with flounces and seed pearls tumbled into her arms.

At Christmas, she felt certain the bicycle would be hers, at long last. She noticed Mama and Popi behaving peculiarly. She'd caught them whispering late at night and growing hushed when she entered a room. They were no longer open and joking with her. They were secretive as if plotting, Janira thought, a great surprise. Early Christmas morning, she dressed quickly in the milky blue dawn. She plaited her hair haphazardly as she raced to the front room, banging her knee on the door.

She searched the front room, tossing aside cushions from the window seat and lifting a throw rug with her toe, as if to uncover the bicycle in some flattened, pre-assembled state. She examined the white-washed entry way, peering into a vase. She poked through the kitchen cabinets, yanked open the oven and checked behind the flour sacks in the pantry. When she found nothing, she ran out of the house to investigate the garden. Of course, they would hide it in the garden, or perhaps in the tool shed. As she slid open the door of the aluminum shed, she felt a strange prickly silence at her back. At once, the lawn trembled and quaked beneath her bare feet. Immediately, she heard a thunderous blast and a flash of light pulled her uncomprehending eyes back to the house. Flames thrust

through the windows of her parents' bedroom with a popping sound. Next billows of black smoke rolled out through the hollowed frames.

"One of the worst explosions," Mr. Sandoval, a quiet, gentle neighbor with bubble-shaped glasses, told her. "Worse than the bomb in the post office."

"But, why?" Janira wanted to know, after the screaming, the sobbing, the hiccoughing gasps had finally left her feeling weak and hollow and she found she could make human sounds again.

"Who knows why they do such things," he answered, blinking through the thick lenses.

Janira stayed with the Sandovals for a few weeks. Like a numb, dumb little ghost, she slept cramped on their small sofa, nibbled at their meals, and spoke to no one. Phone calls were made and telegrams sent. Finally, an uncle was located in the north and he sent money for Janira to come to him. The Sandovals drove her to the airport in a borrowed army jeep.

The scene at the airport disturbed and frightened Janira. Grown men wept openly, women charged the ticket lines with children on their backs, in their arms and entwined around their legs. Everywhere, soldiers slunk about with automatic rifles and long belts with bullets.

Janira boarded a large jet clutching a small pink duffle bag Mrs. Sandoval had given her for the few clothes they'd bought her. A friendly woman in a blue overall snapped a belt across Janira's hips and spoke to her in a strange-sounding Spanish. From the small round window, Janira waved once to her friends and did not glance at them again as the jet taxied through the runway. For their part, the Sandovals shrugged and drove home.

In the weeks following the explosion, the Sandovals supervised the removal of charred debris next door by assorted trash collectors and rag pickers. They claimed several nearly new garden tools from the aluminum shed for themselves. Jaime Sandoval puzzled over a crate filled with bumpy green hand grenades daintily

packed like chocolates in pleated paper sockets. Finally he threw a tarp over the box and left it on the shelf. In the back of the shed, behind a nest of newborn mice mewling and shivering in the unaccustomed light, Sandoval's beam struck an orange reflective disc. The flashlight probed the shadows to wash over a blue bicycle leaning in the corner. He brushed it free of cobwebs and wiped away the dust with an old towel. On the weekend he would take it to the flea market in town and sell it, he hoped, for a good price.

In the United States, Janira lived with her uncle and his wife and their four children in a small apartment deep in the barrio. Her uncle, a large man like her father, but with a humble and embarrassed air about him, took her to the junior high school near their home. In the new school, it seemed everyone spoke a loud, harsh English that grated on Janira's ears like a constant rain of factory noise. The girls wore short skirts, make up and teased hair. Janira felt awkward in her long starched dress and plain braid. Gradually, she was herded with some other children who spoke no English into a room.

The teacher was an ancient Asian woman who spoke very rapidly. Janira could not understand a word. Hot tears clouded her eyes. Then the door flung open and a chubby dark boy burst dramatically into the room. "Don't cry," he exclaimed. "Don't cry, I'm here!" The Asian teacher spoke hard and fast, but the chubby boy translated her words just as quickly. Janira gripped her pencil. She breathed with easy relief. She knew what to do.

After the class, Janira followed the chubby boy to the play yard. He walked rapidly and she did not want to lose him. He was tall with a curly cap of blue black hair. Round glasses perched on his snub nose and when he smiled wide a row of metallic braces glittered between his lips. Janira kept at his heels, afraid he would vanish in the swelling crowd of students. She followed him past the students to a grassy field, where he approached a bike rack. He fumbled at one of the bicycles and finally disentangled it from the rack. It was then that he saw Janira, standing at the edges of his shadow. He smiled and pushed the bike toward her. "You want to ride?" he asked, thrusting the handlebars at her. "Come on. I got

time." The bicycle had been black but the paint had chipped in rusty splotches along the frame. The seat was bent and the cushion had split revealing a gap of straw colored ticking.

Janira grabbed the bicycle and climbed on at once. She wobbled at first and then pedalled surely and smoothly over the pavement near the field. She filled her lungs and she wanted to sing, or laugh, or cry as she sailed over the cement. It was exactly as she had known it would be. She felt as if she were flying in a dream and laughing as the world spun by. Then the old bicycle faltered. The tire hit a stone and bucked Janira from the seat. She tumbled in a heap near the grass. The boy galloped after her. His face contorted with worry. "Don't cry," he shouted. "Don't cry, I'm coming." Though there were tears glistening in Janira's wide brown eyes, she was not crying. She smiled as she pulled the boy's outstretched hand and yanked him to the grass beside her. Both laughed loud and hard as they struggled to pull themselves to their feet.

Kim Guthrie

Ca. 240 BC

Ca. 240 BC
Hot, dry, dusty,
Somewhere near the juniper—
Though I've never been to New Mexico,
I was there,
This time in San Francisco.
A basket in glass encasement
Next to a printed page—
Ca. 240 BC, New Mexico.
A woman had woven this,
A woman I desperately wanted to see,
There were no photographs.
There is a picture I remember,
Of my great great grandmother.
But it was in black and white
And the juniper was green
And I was wearing white Nikes with a blue swoosh—
But I was there.
There, seeing her hands fade in and out,
Her face with only one expression
Because of the photograph.
Hands like mine, but darker, they were hers.
Hers in the photograph
Or hers in ca. 240 BC.

Because of the photograph
There was an image
Of something disappeared
Struggling to survive
Anasazi
Woman
Because of the photograph
And the basket
Whose hands had woven
Whose hands
And the colors of black and white, green, blue
Fading
Mental fragmentation
Those hands,
Old, dry, weaving a basket
Image-making power
There was in San Francisco one day
An Anasazi woman
Because of the photograph.

And the basket
An artifact
Art and fact
Bound by the time on the page
An Anasazi woman never knew
Whose motionless lips could never respond
To the meaning on the page
And the basket under glass—
Material substance
Woven by hands and documented in text—
Justification in language
Without the sound
Chafing
Of dry grass and old hands
And the wind
Through the door leaving the museum
And the basket.

Helen Laurence

How To Be A Lesbian In 1957 In Seventh Grade

Stroll across lunchtime grass
    to the bright group of girls.
Smile as usual, eager to share,
until one of those you walk home with
all giggly sly asks you
do you know what a queer is.

Muster laughter as the others
burst into the hilarity only seventh grade girls
    can manufacture.
Wonder if your inner confusion
creates the same chasm across your face
    as it's carving across your heart.
Try to make your smile less forced.
Pray that no one can read your mind.

Next Thursday join the poodle-skirts
    and learn that wearing green on Thursdays
        means something.
Decide to be extra careful on Thursdays.
Maybe then no one will suspect
you spend ninety percent of your time
    daydreaming about women.

Remember, as you ran from sixth-grade boys
    who tried to grab your new breasts,
the whispers and adults speaking of Jess and Deena
    who must be separated.
Remember crying "no" inside,
    "they are happy and so beautiful, please
        leave them alone."

Think back to September when you noticed with joy
they still held each other, if more secretly.
But why did Deena's family move from town in spring?

Begin to fully comprehend that preferring women
is more shameful than being black, brown, crippled,
    Jehovah's Witness, or even retarded.
Begin to see that hiding,
    for you,
is not a choice but an imperative.

When the girls suck milk
    from cow breasts packaged in cartons
        labeled HOMO milk
and titter
and speculate on who's HOMO
giggle.
Then go home and speculate on
sickness, sanity, being HOMO.

Come home from school on time.
Try to answer your mother
    who has read your diary
when she asks you why do you love
    Gale so much.
Decide never to leave anything around again.
For the next fifteen years burn
    every journal you write.

Annette Cenkner

Boom Babies

There's nothing wrong with me just because
my arms weren't meant to Rock-a-Bye a baby.
And just because my elbow's not bent in
that special way it takes to wipe a baby's behind,
does not mean I've been left out of a
secret female rite of passage that makes
a woman a whole human being.
I don't lament that I've missed out
on the latest baby boom. You won't hear
me complain about my lack of labor pains. I'll
never protest about my small milkless chest.
But, whatever you do,
don't talk to Princess Fergie, The Virgin Mary or
my mom. They'll tell you swollen ankles are a
blessed sign from God.

Katherine Petit

The Surprise Is Inside

I cut
the
edge
of the plane
your forehead
across
the triangle
side of your brow
down
the slender cylinder
around
the ball
your nose
and
your full lips
flatten.
Sharp
even
strokes
unfurl
oval cheeks
the
cleft in your chin
splits.

A slice
across
the border
of
square
jaw
followed
by
the ellipse
of
your neck.
I cut
into
the giant trapezoidal cone
of
your torso.
The knife
slides
through cubes
spheres
cylinders
of
arms
legs
genitals.

Your body
falls
flat
on my page.

Andy Rivera

The Ball Game

How can I tell you about my father? Can I tell you how I rolled over to pick up the ringing phone and heard my brother say "It's Dad," and how I thought he was joking, wished he was joking, but knew he wasn't? And what would that tell you, other then that I don't always believe my brother? Nothing, probably, but I got that call, and two days later I stood, staring into the canyon behind my parent's house, my brother pressing a cold beer into the nape of my neck, my father gone.

I hadn't been home in about two years, but nothing had really changed. The canyon was still there, still overgrown with dry brush, and the back door still screeched every time it was opened. That was how I knew my brother was coming, that and the crunch of his heavy tread on the cement. So I jumped when the bottle touched my neck, but I wasn't surprised.

"Beer?" he said.

"Yeah," I said, and I reached behind me for the bottle, not taking my eyes off the canyon. I was trying to find the tree we'd built a little fort in years before, and having no luck. John handed me the bottle and stayed behind me and to the right, so that he was a large gray blur in the corner of my eye.

"What are you looking for?"

"Nothing," I said.

"Oh," he said, and he moved up to the wall and stood next to me, loosening his tie in the process. "Where's the stadium?"

"Dodger Stadium?"

"Yeah."

"I don't know," I said, and then I pointed. "Over there, I think. That smudge of blue."

"Yeah, I see it."

We were both quiet for a couple of minutes, looking at nothing, sipping our beers, brothers that were strangers, really. I remember feeling guilty about being out there, away from the guests and their forced grief, and at the same time vaguely wishing that John would go away, and wishing that he would stay.

"Had you talked to him lately?" he said.

"No, you?"

"About a week ago. It's hard to understand."

"Yeah," I said, undoing my own tie. "Do you remember building that fort down there? I can't find the tree."

"The fort?" John said, his beer half way to his mouth. "Yeah, I remember the fort. Do you remember all the Dodger games we went to?"

"Yeah, I remember Dad taking us to a few."

"Do you remember when he caught that fly ball?"

"No," I said, and I stole a quick sideways glance at John. His face told me he was well past his first beer.

"Man," he said, "it was beautiful. We were sitting second level on the first base side, and I-forget-who came up and popped it right towards us. You and me, we had our gloves out, and there was the ball coming right at us and we froze, but Dad just kind of reached out and caught it. Don't you remember?"

"No," I said, but what I wanted to say was yes, because I did remember. I remembered looking through my glove, peanut shells crunching under my feet, as that little white pill flew at me, getting bigger all the time, and how my father stuck his arm out and just bare-handed that ball, and I remembered the smack of the leather on his palm and the smile on his face. But "It must have hurt" was all I said.

"Yeah, it must have," my brother said as he leaned back against the wall, his face raised to the sun. "Why do you think he did it?"

"It was coming right at him," I said. "It was reflex, self-protection. I'd do the same thing."

John reached up and massaged the back of his neck. "I meant why did he kill himself?"

"Oh," I said, and I should have said that is why, but instead I nudged John and pointed. "I think I see the fort-tree."

Jeremy Nave

some trees
grow slanted because
of the way the wind
blows. I suppose
it's easier that
way. And when

the top spreads out its
leaves and fruit, the
slant is well hidden—
like a father behind the
movie camera who is
never in the film.

Daniel Slosberg

Santa Monica Pier

Down the concrete ramp, past
the singer who's buddy

shouts "gimme' a quarter so my
boyfriend'll shut up." Down

onto dank, oil-dense planks,
past the carousel, where frozen

horses forever follow the
mad music. Men entangled

in tuxedos and women wrapped
in mink gulp sauteed mushrooms

while a man outside plucks
crusts from a yellow garbage

can. Farther down, past
oysters on ice, corn dogs

and cotton candy, past
celebrity card-board cutouts,

catapult a rubber toad onto
a mechanical lily-pad and win

a stuffed frog prince. Down
past clouds of hot cinnamon,

an incendiary crowd, alcohol
on its breath, past Madame

Cecelia, spiritual consultant.
A jellyfish drifts by. A gull

harangues the mob. Farther down,
the pier widens into a phalanx of fishermen. A knife

slices a white croaker's skin and snaps its neck.
Cinnabar entrails smoulder, covered by flies with

lead eyes. Barbed hooks tear blindly at the air.
The pier a toppled skyscraper extending over

the continent's edge, penetrating and provoking
the sea; a plumb line into chaos, born

of smoke-belching pile-drivers, bulldozers,
and cement; its feet bound by the sea, her

white claws climbing upward through the night-
shrouded pilings to avenge the violation.

Ronnie A. Saldana

dead wood

I bowled a 204
the day jesus died
four strikes
five spares
good friday the 13th.
evening mass,
sitting in a pew
and frowning at three choir members
singing the lord's passion a capella,
arranged like a 6-7-10 split.
crucify him crucify him
pierces through a drowsy crowd.
my mind fills with thoughts
of speed, spin luck with oil
on the fourth board.
all are needed for impossible splits.
the lord's passion is ending,
replaced by a meandering
eight foot cross
which makes its way down
the lane to an undecorated altar.
lined up, i aim to kiss
the elusive one pin
so i can go in peace
to bowl a 205.

Alexandra Mathews

Cats

Willful and
quickassed
they beat carpet
with their toepads,
smooth and pinkish,
one end of the house
to the other,
repeatedly racing
to beat previous times
set in the inaccuracy
of their felonious
brains
their adolescent disregard
falls prey to
serious feline encounter
where nothing's sacred.
Their biting
seems meaner today,
their teeth bared barer
they attack
like the insignificance
of a fart
or as reflexively
bringing louder mews
of protest,
breeding harder nips
of tougher flesh.

Emerging pre-lotharios
not even fuck-conscious
they dance paw to paw
and sleep cheek to cheek;
they nuzzle as they dream.
Now they lie breathless,
all bones and no battle,
drained in their
shared state of oblivion.
Borderless fur of
continuous cat,
these two romp in a
dreamscape of
singular meadow,
entwined,
indistinguishable.

Robin di Perna

A Sestina Party To Celebrate Our Love

Let's throw a parti-colored, honkytonk party.
We'll have those zany zydeco musicians in to play.
You'll know me because I will be playing Shiva and wear
his exploding headband, the one with the gelignite snakes
that'll swivel in time with the accordion music,
and we'll end the evening with your rendition of the Kaddish
Kabuki.

You know, the one where you intone Yiddish and put Japanese
Kabuki
white paste on your face and paint on smiling large red lips that
snake
around your mouth in a smirking conga line to the vibrating music.
That gold kimono with the thick black Hebrew letters you can wear
to top it off—make it look like we're putting on a Jewish Noh play,
something they can really call a strange party.

You know I usually don't like to party.
I never know what fingering food to serve or what clothes to wear.
And we usually have a fight and hiss like infuriated snakes
rasping 'round one another. No, that's no Noh play
I'd like to go to. Me, I'd like to sing some other music,
like the kind you hear while you're watching Kabuki.

But this, this will be a different party,
because we have something to celebrate, aside from your yenta Kabuki
creation, that is. I wish we could turn up that hot gumbo music
blasting out sounds from I don't know where.
Those New Orleans musicians really know how to play.
Later, we'll reward them with your canapes of Taiwanese fried snakes.

It'll make them more virile, then they'll really play.
We don't have to worry about virility, my gentle Kabuki
doll. When we make love it's like psychedelic music—
where the pyramid meets the eye. That's what this hoe-down's for, we're
in love, aren't we. Everyone who arrives that's in love gets a party
favor: those lovely plasticine pink feathered boa snakes

that we've been keeping in the closet along with your Kabuki
gown. They can drape them on their necks, or better yet, they can wear
those dreadful dreadlock wigs we wore to Suzanne's party
when we were going through our Rasta phase and played Reggae music,
heating water in hookahs, watching smoke wound like blue snakes
coming out of our numb mouths; and for you I made that fateful play.

Now, that was some kind of party; your voice drifted like music
into my once cold heart of snakes; I just had to make that play
to win your love, enshrine your Kabuki eye filled with semite-love ware.

Anita M. E. Moore

Elegy On A Bar Of Soap

How clearly I recall the hour you emerged
triumphantly from your box,
You who lie now utterly spent,
Formless, in the slimy debris
of your former self.
So smooth you were, so firm and shapely,
In the days when the letters stamped
on your brow
Still boldly proclaimed the glory that
once was yours.
How ceaselessly you laboured
throughout your life,
Wearing away your youth so that others
might find comfort.
How much tired skin you must have healed with
that deep-cleansing, moisturizing caress,
Leaving more and more of yourself
behind each time,
Giving so freely of that of which you had
so little,
And taking in return only the
grime and the soil
Which is, in the end, all that this mad world
has to offer.

You did not even complain when someone carelessly
turned the water on the soapdish
And left you to drown helplessly
in a stagnant, murky puddle.
There you lie now, your shapely perfection gone,
your firmness dissipated,
A pale, bloated shadow of what you once were.
Now, your faithful service forgotten, you are
Condemned to be scraped mercilessly away
by ungrateful hands.
And soon, very soon, another bar,
fresh and fragrant,
Will take your place,
And lie in the dish that once was yours...
...as if you had never been.

Stephanie Rioux

Lively Dinner Guests #1 (A Sestina)

Tonight we have invited Frida Kahlo for dinner.
Our hair swings over our cheeks as we lay the fruits
on the table. We are swathed in green velvet,
humming like birds to ourselves, filling bowls with sweet noodles,
feeling them like vines surround us as we breathe
in the fumes from the pies in the oven.

My hands hold my belly warm as an oven
which in its crevices cooks its own dinner.
It weaves with electricity and blood and breath
a cream so thick and sweet as fruits,
and Frida's thick vines, slippery as noodles,
lift it, dripping, to my mouth. Frida arrives in black velvet,

breaking up the dream, and our velvet
humming coalesces to greet her with pies fresh from the oven.
Her long black curls hang and swing like noodles
upon her shoulders as she sits down for dinner.
She holds out her palms in the candlelight, full of fruits.
We each take one and our laughter breathes

out, fuses, adding odor to odor which we breathe
in through our noses. The green and black velvet
enclosing our bellies, our breasts, is a reflective bed for the light
thrown from the fruit's
bright colors. We begin to eat, warm as ovens,
eyes as dark, we begin to eat our dinner,
smiling quietly as the noodles

slink between our lips like snakes. "The noodles
are like vines," says Frida. Her breath
is so close to our faces, and moves our dinner
to levitate, as if cast on a sea of blue velvet.
There is a buzz coming from the oven.
It is the last pie, filled with hot fruits.

"My heart is a fruit,"
says Frida, as she sucks in a noodle,
"and my head is an oven.
I know the closeness of my last breath.
I am not scared. I feel the velvet
against my body as in a coffin. This is my last dinner."

Frida tells us as she scoops out the pie's fruit, "This is my last
breath."
"At the funeral I will serve noodles," I say. Blacker and blacker, her
velvet
dress becomes a gaseous oven, and we fold, inhaling the fumes,
over dinner.

What It's Like Being A Girl And Living On Planet Earth.

It is very nice to know the Earth is rotating.
Besides that,
I have very many nice toys,
and I'm almost able to buy
these very nice blue glass beads.
I live on the Earth.
I am all lost in the grass,
a pepper-black bean left over
from a kindergarten counting box,
quite able to see
how up there the green grass
touches the sky.
When James looks into the sky
he says he thinks
it's very small.
Well but James has been to Jupiter.
He flies around it eyes closed
on his flying carpet,
tossing heads of lettuce into
Deeper Space,
nut sauce in his ears.
I stay in the grass,
eating dirty potato chips and waiting
for big sneakers to come step on me.
Otherwise I chew pebbles,
or tickle worms
cos they don't know a goddamn
about what's going on and will
only think they have some
awful itch they must
cure cure cure.

I like to live in the grass.
It's not bad I have religion.
I make mosaics out of old gum
and big-eye smiling icons
out of dead sow bugs.
I sit under the sprinklers
and pray to god knows who.
And I don't even care
if the universe is expanding.
I live on the Earth.
I do not want to ride
on a flying carpet,
I eat my lettuce,
and I do not make sauce
out of nuts.
I am lost in the very high grass, and
It is very nice to know the Earth
is rotating.

David Sandler

The Jerseymaid Ritual

"Can you hear them? Can you hear the elves?" Molly asks as she pours more milk into my bowl. I tilt my head and bring my ear down to the bowl. I look up at Molly and she senses that I want her next to me. Setting the bottled milk on the kitchen table, she sits down in the empty chair beside me, pulling her chair close to mine. She tucks her hair behind her ear and lowers it to the bowl so that her nose is about two inches from mine as she listens. Raising her index finger to her lips she lets me know that silence is required if the elves are to respond.

We stare at each other, heads turned sideways hovering over the bowl listening for elves. More accurately we are staring into one another, our concentration so intense that for that instant we are not two people but one being of singular purpose, and I think I know what it must feel like to be an identical twin.

I see my reflection in her blue eyes, a blue that reminds me of the hottest part of a flame. Her strawberry blonde hair reaches the top of her shoulders. She has a round face with piercing dimples, and her wide smile enlarges her freckles and makes her appear as if she's blushing.

In a whispered voice she begins to tell me about the elves. "They live in the cereal. Their magical powers are activated by the milk, and that makes it possible for them to talk to one another without having to rise to the surface of the bowl. They never get old and they never die. They stay young forever. They dance and sing and play kid's games, games like Chutes and Ladders and Twister. Grown-ups don't believe though..."

"Why not?" I interrupt her.

"Because grown-ups can't hear them," she says.

"Why not?" I ask again.

"I don't know," she says shrugging her shoulders. The corners of her mouth turn slightly upward, and I can tell that she is amused by my questions.

We become silent again until the silence becomes overwhelming, and then it happens. I hear them. I hear the elves. They are talking to one another in a language I cannot understand, but I can hear their laughter. Molly, obviously aware of my discovery, whispers, "Snap, Crackle," and then sucks in her lips to make a loud slurping sound and lets out a shrill "Pop!" that sends us both into bursting laughter. She makes me laugh so hard that tears stream down my face, and I have to press my thighs together to keep from peeing in my pants. She ruffles my hair with her hands and I am grinning stupidly from ear to ear. I never tell her how much I like it when she ruffles my hair like that, how the sensation of it makes me feel warm and special inside. I never tell my sister Molly how much I love her.

"Can you hear them? Can you hear the elves?..."

The stewardess tells us to prepare for landing. I push up my food tray and put away the playing cards, upset that I have to ruin my game of Solitaire. I buckle myself in and glance out the window of the plane. From my window seat I can see the LAX landing strip through the smog.

I look around to locate where the emergency gear is, as if in a real emergency I could survive a plane crash with an inflatable jacket and some choice oxygen. I hate landings. So many things can go wrong with a landing. I hate being in the air. But even more, I dread the thought of having to land. It is Molly's birthday and I am coming home.

As the plane prepares to land there is a part of me that hopes the plane will crash on the runway. Perhaps the drama of it all will force my parents to take notice of me. Leaning back against the seat I pop a cassette into my Sony walkman and squeeze the headphones tightly against my ears. Closing my eyes, I press play and turn up the volume. "Oobladi. Ooblada..."

Waiting for Sammy to arrive, Molly plays hopscotch with her best friend, Sharon. Sharon is also in the third grade, and they do everything together. The squares are drawn onto the sidewalk with colored chalk, and small rocks are used as markers.

Sammy picks Molly up at the corner bus stop which is directly in front of our house. Sammy is the school bus driver and he drives the Carpenter Elementary School Bus. His name is not really Sammy, but he is one of the few black people I have met and I confuse him with Sammy Davis Jr. Molly turns bright red the first time I call him Sammy and ask him to sing "Candy Man."

I wait outside with Molly, Sharon, and some of the other kids from the neighborhood for the school bus. Even though I am too young to ride the bus, mom says I can wait outside with Molly as long as I promise not to step off the curb and Molly promises to watch over me.

While Molly is playing hopscotch, I pace back and forth with great caution along the sidewalk, pretending that the cracks are hair-triggers and that stepping on one would set off the explosives that are buried beneath the street. I keep my head down, looking towards the ground, trying to keep a steady, sometimes rhythmic cadence between the cracks.

The bus is very loud and nobody has to see the bus to know that it is coming. The dusty orange bus pulls up in front of our house. The doors pull in and everyone begins climbing the steps and heading towards the back. I wave wildly, excited to see Sammy. "Hi Sammy," I holler, and Molly rolls her eyes looking to Sammy as if to ask for forgiveness for her stupid brother. Sammy smiles at Molly and lays his hand on her shoulder. He waves back to me and says, "Have a good day, Ace," and then the doors close.

Molly lowers the window to wave goodbye to me, and tells me to have a good day at Kindergarten. The bus takes off and at that moment I wish I were on it. As the bus heads down the street, Molly's waving hand is still visible in the window. I follow the bus down the street until it turns the corner leaving a ghost of exhaust fumes. As I walk back inside the house I imagine Molly waving to me from the bus window all the way to school.

The plane lowers itself to the runway for a safe landing. Passengers get out of their seats, pick out their baggage from the baggage overhang, and wait in line to exit the plane. I turn up the volume of my walkman. When everyone has left the plane, I am still sitting at my window seat; the last occupant on board.

Sometimes I think I think too much, and other times I know I do. It is at these times, when thoughts become overwhelming, that I tune out, become numb, refuse to contemplate my present existence. One way of doing this is to think about Molly. I wonder if I could stop thinking of her even if I tried. I am afraid that if I stop thinking of her, I will forget what she was like, and then all I will have are aging memories based on a single photograph. It's ironic how the truly special moments can't be appreciated until some time has passed, and once time has passed you can never fully capture the same moment twice.

When I'm not thinking of Molly, I often imagine how my life would have turned out under different circumstances. What if I were an only child, or the oldest child? What if I had the same mother but a different father, or a different mother but the same father, or different parents altogether? What if I had been raised by a band of gypsies, or brought up in a traveling carny surrounded by side show freaks? What if I were a giant or a hobbit, or a feral child living in the jungle?

I don't want to leave my seat. I am breathing rapidly; my heart is beating at a crazed rate. My temples are pulsating and I feel a migraine coming on.

Finally I force myself up from my seat and I retrieve my duffle bag from the overhang. Walking down the aisle of the plane, I feel like I'm walking in slow motion on a tread mill floor. I walk through the terminal and I see my father waiting for me. He looks at his wrist watch and extends his arm to show me the time, expressing disapproval at my lateness.

Molly. Sammy doesn't bring Molly home today. I want to believe that she just missed her bus, but already my head is dizzy with another truth, and I cry. My parents turn towards me and look away as I look up, their faces tear-streaked, their eyes full of panic.

"We don't know anything definite yet," they tell me and they send me into another room, any other room, because they know that as long as I am in the same room with them, they are in the same room with something definite.

I choose to go to Molly's room because that is the only way I can think of to feel connected with her. I shut the door behind me and stand against it. I slide down to the bedroom floor and strain to hear the conversation in the kitchen where the detective stands with my parents. At the same time, I want to put my hands over my ears. If I can't hear what is being said, then it won't be true.

Molly has been abducted from school. The detective assigned to Molly's case explains that Molly was seen in front of the playground being shoved into the back seat of a white cadillac, which then sped down the main road. The detective assures my parents that he will do everything in his power to find Molly.

I crack open the door to see my dad standing in the corner of the kitchen with his back turned to us. His back is shaking up and down. My mom is pacing the floor, her hands shaking uncontrollably. She walks by the kitchen table and knocks over a bottle of milk. The bottle falls to the floor and shatters. My dad and the detective turn around, startled by the crash, but my mom doesn't seem aware of what has happened. On the floor shards of glass are floating in a pool of white.

The detective requests a photograph of Molly to circulate around the neighborhood. Dad pulls his wallet out of his pants pocket and removes a photograph from its plastic sleeve. The photograph is of Molly and me standing in front of our garage, arms around each other. Molly has on a pair of canary yellow overalls and a white tee shirt; I am wearing brown corduroys and a blue O.P. surf shirt. Molly flashes an exaggerated smile for the camera, while I squint into the sun. Dad takes a pair of scissors out of a kitchen drawer, and before I know it, he takes the scissors to the photograph and I am cut out. The detective holds the image of Molly, still in my embrace, in his hands.

I remember how I felt the day of Molly's disappearance, but other memories become cloudy, fragmented. I am like a t.v. with bad reception.

We are sitting at the dining room table for the Passover seder. Molly sits next to mom, and I sit across from Molly, next to Dad. Dad is telling the story of Passover, about the plagues that G-d cast upon the Egyptians. Dad says that the Jewish people took the blood from the sacrificial lamb and applied the blood to their doorposts. He explains that this was so that the Angel of Death would know which houses to pass over in order to kill only the Egyptian first born sons.

I see Molly stirring around uncomfortably in her chair. She shakes her legs nervously beneath the table. It feels as if the whole room is shaking.

"I don't understand," she says. "If G-d knows everything then why doesn't he know which houses to pass over without us having to kill a lamb?"

"Ours is not to question G-d, Molly. G-d has his reasons for everything," dad says not looking up from his haggadah.

He reads: "Behold the hand of the Eternal will be against the cattle that is in the field, against the horses, the donkeys, the camels, the oxen and the sheep, a very grievous plague..."

Molly interrupts, "But I don't understand," she pleads and her voice is shaking as her lips begin to quiver. "Why do the children and the animals have to suffer for something they didn't do?"

My dad's voice is harsh as he snaps at my mom, "Will you talk to your daughter?"

My mom moves her seat closer to Molly and gets right up in her face and says, "Dear, if you keep talking like this, G-d will cast a plague on you!"

Molly's lips are quivering something awful now, and tears stream down her face. She looks in my direction as if asking for help. Finally she whines, "But I don't...," and my mom slaps the question out of her. Mom slaps her so hard that she leaves a red imprint of her hand on Molly's face. Molly turns towards me with a glazed look of confusion and fear on her face. Since the day Molly was abducted I sometimes see the same expression on my own face when I pass a mirror.

The photograph of Molly appears on the back of a Carnation milk carton. Soon after that my mom stops buying milk from glass bottles, and only buys the milk that comes in cartons at the grocery store. The photo of Molly is grainy, black and white. Above the picture the caption reads: "Have you seen this child?" and below the picture a toll free number is given to call. Mom bought ten cartons of milk the first morning that the photograph appeared on the carton.

I remove the scissors from the kitchen drawer and cut the photograph of Molly from the carton. I find myself cutting the photographs of all the missing children from the backs of the cartons.

I am the detective from the Carnation Detective Agency. My H.Q. is at home in my bedroom and I work undercover. I hide the photographs of the missing children in an old shoe box, which I tuck underneath my bed with my coloring books. I search everywhere for the missing children. I search in grocery stores, restaurants, and the shopping malls. I can't find the children anywhere, and in the back of my mind, I often wonder if they are all together like the Lost Boys of Never Never Land, and a part of me is envious.

I start riding the Carpenter Elementary School bus. Sammy doesn't drive the bus anymore. The driver is some old lady who dyes her hair a different color every other week. I walk towards the back of the bus and sit alone by the window. The boys, who are sitting around me, are looking through their baseball cards, talking trades and swaps. I take out the shoe box with the photographs of the missing children from my pack and I begin looking through them, strategically planning out the best way to conduct my search. One of the boys comes up to me and asks me if I want to trade cards. I tell him that I can't, and he gives me a puzzled look and returns to his seat. I don't bother trying to explain to him; he would never understand. No one could.

I am standing on the step ladder in the kitchen, twisting crepe paper and taping it to the ceiling. All day, in preparation for this birthday party, I have been blowing up balloons, putting bows on

all the stuffed animals that can't be wrapped, and rewrapping presents that have accumulated over the years.

The photograph of Molly, in her canary yellow overalls, is situated in the center of the table like a shrine, and is surrounded by gardenias that my mother has brought in from the garden. My parents have distorted the photograph, and I can't help thinking that there is something about these parties that, like the photograph, are not honest.

I don't know why I keep coming back year after year to celebrate Molly's birthday. At first I thought my parents celebrated her birthday out of some sense of hope that Molly would return. And if she had returned on her birthday, then she would see that they hadn't forgotten her.

Eventually, I begin to realize what this birthday really is: an annual funeral. And like any funeral, it is not for the dead but for the living, not for Molly but for my parents. My mother and father need to convince themselves that they are good parents, that they were good parents to Molly when she was at home and this is how they prove this to themselves.

Father brings in the familiar chocolate cake, with the red script that reads: "Happy Birthday Molly." Nine candles are lit around the border for the nine years of age she would have been before she was taken away from us. We sing 'Happy Birthday' and let the candles burn themselves out. We turn our chairs around, like we always do, to face the door and sit in silence waiting for Molly to walk into the room.

"I wonder if Sharon will come by?" my mom asks no one in particular.

"Mother," I say. "Sharon hasn't been around for the past fifteen years." But she is oblivious to what I am trying to tell her, and she looks back at the door.

The silence is too much. I can't take the smothering silence a moment longer. I'm tired. I'm tired of sitting her waiting vigil.

I turn around and see, lying on the chair next to mine, the old shoe box with the photographs of the missing children, and I wonder who took the box out from under my bed. I open up the shoe box and inside I am surprised to find brand new black tap shoes. I look curiously at the tap shoes and put them on my feet. The fit is

perfect and I now know what I must do. I get up and stand in front of my parents. The music starts and I begin to tap.

BOOM BOOM CHAKA LAKA LAKA BOOM

I tap and tap, brushing foot back and forth, shuffling my feet, stepping right, left, right, left. My feet are tapping out rhythm to the music. I am tapping fifty taps in five seconds. Hop, shuffle, hop, shuffle, heel, slap, shuffle, tap, tap, tap.

BOOM BOOM CHAKA LAKA BOOM BOOM

My parents still don't notice me. They stare right through me. I jump up on the kitchen table in front of them. I begin doing forward flips, backward flips, cartwheels, somersaults, and I come out tapping. I reach into my pants pocket and find it full of sand. I sprinkle the sand onto the table and begin tapping out a soft shoe. Slide, slide, shuffle, shuffle, slide. My dad reaches across the table and plucks the photograph from the center of the table which is now beside my moving feet; it seems as though he is going to reach right through me. I am swinging my arms frantically, and I have broken into a sweat. I throw myself down on my knees and slide the distance of the table, through the sand and the gardenias and the birthday cake, with my arms extended out. And that's when the music stops, and the dance is over.

I look to my parents and they are silent. They don't seem to see me. All of a sudden, I hear faint clapping from behind me. I turn around towards the direction of the door, and I am staring into total darkness.

"They can't hear you," Molly says emerging from the darkness dressed in her canary yellow overalls and white tee shirt. I see my reflection in her blue eyes, and her strawberry-blonde hair covers her ears. She is just as I remember her.

"They never get old and they never die," I say. "They stay young forever. Grown-ups don't believe though..."

"Why not?" she interrupts me.

"Because grown-ups can't hear?" I answer.

"Why not?" she asks again.

"Because they don't take the time to listen," I tell her, and then

we both burst out laughing. We laugh so hard that tears stream down our faces, and our laughter echoes throughout the house.

She ruffles my hair with her hand and I am grinning stupidly from ear to ear.

"I like it when you ruffle my hair like that," I tell her.

"I know," Molly says.

I embrace my sister, and we are frozen in the moment.

"I love you Molly," I whisper in her ear, and she pulls me closer to her.

Marion Heyn

The Discoverers

> "One doesn't discover new lands
> without consenting to lose sight of the shore
> for a very long time." Andre Gide

New lands, the discovery of new lands!
Weeks on the ocean, the grey-green waves
And still only the dream, the promise
Of our new lands, the discovery of new lands.

Setting sail, hoisting the sheets to possibility,
We left safe haven and home weeks ago.
Before us the assurance of adventure—
Eyes on hope, on the new, on the belief
Of fortunes fulfilled, visions realized,
Promises kept. Yes, Captain, you, you
Promised to carry us to Fortune, to Fame,
To a New Shore...

The women on the shore, wrapped in carmine,
Saffron, livid green, potent lavender,
Women of the gauze shawls, they
Reach for slender fingers of hot peppers.
Capsicum annum, long, fiery threats to sanity,
Capsicum frutescens, the botanist's term for
Scorching, burning culinary torment!
As though they lived and breathed
This poison, this peril, each and every day,
Fluttering hands dip into scarlet mountains,
Play with fire, laughter on the breeze.

In these new lands, on these ancient islands,
Palm trees filigree the sun upon the shore,
Upon the foreheads, white and brown,
Upon the uncomfortable and unaccustomed,
Upon the comfortable and accustomed
Alike. All is sun and sand-hot wind.

Brown hands, hummingbird-fast, sort
The peppers, pluck the strings
Under equatorial sun.
Beneath tropical moon,
Brown hands lift pregnant gourds,
Sweet fruit, soft tongues to eager mouths.
Brown eyes, furrowed brows, perceive white
Hands shake in oppressive heat. Difference.
Incomprehensible freedoms.
They falter but refuse to fall.

Persistence. Tenacity. The consenting to endure.
the insistence on Perseverance: Mother,
God and Country. Civilization.

The women on the shore, under palm shade
And island rhythm, prestidigitate,
Sorting and gleaning, tending and cleaning.
Saffron, pomegranate, quince, nightshade
Splash of shawls, scent of hours
Peppers in baskets, baskets of flowers.
The women on the shore; the men lost
To their dreams of discovery:
New songs, old lamentations.

Losing sight of shore for a very long time,
A commerce of storm-green waves,
Daily, daily, only the horizon itself.
Sailors toward a new world, discover
Familiar poses, new configurations:
Women on the shore.

Tracy Putirka

The Tooth Fairy

I open my mouth and a tooth falls out, a small ivory incisor which lands on a quarter lying on the plush green carpet. I watch as the quarter wraps itself around the tooth and sinks into the carpet disappearing. I wonder if the tooth fairy is getting greedy, wanting something in return for taking away a tooth and leaving a silver dollar in its place. Or maybe he needs to collect four quarters before he can give a dollar. I wonder if I have to give him four teeth. I reach into my pocket and find another quarter and toss it to the ground and laugh so hard that another tooth pops out and lands on the quarter sinking. I throw two more quarters to the ground and laugh. Suddenly I see a sprout growing out of the carpet, a sprout with four root stems extending out toward my feet. The sprout grows taller and begins to bud. The roots wrap around my legs and I fall back onto the bed as the bud begins to open. I watch as petals in the shape of incisors unfold, revealing a gaping mouth. I watch and laugh and more teeth fall out, landing among the sprout's roots. The sprout's stem begins to thicken and I lean back my mouth agape as the flower bends towards me. I'm held tight in the sprouts flowering embrace. Long leaves extend out toward me wrapping around my body, pulling me against the flower. I see my teeth inside. I try to stop the flower's growth but the bloom grows in intensity. I can't escape. The tooth fairy has come, his stem has grown wooden hard and I cannot escape. I give in and lay silent, my face buried in my pillow as the fairy sprout withers back into the ground and disappears and I pray to God that no more of my teeth will fall out for the tooth fairy to come and collect.

David Goldschlag

blue mules in the distance

i once heard about this shrinking thing maybe from some poet about this death thing how it shrinks a dying person and how the shrinking shrinks the family i didn't think it was true then i saw you my grandfather shrinking shrunk to where i could only vaguely recognize you in your own home and when you saw me you tried to shrink the shrinking thing but you didn't see me in your own home you asked jackie to check the chickens out back on the farm (later i asked mom who jackie was but it doesn't make any difference) you kept talking barely audible about the blaze a fire that smolders somewhere in the distance dramatizing the disease the shrinking the poem from some poet

you can't remember losing gold new gold watches in the freshly poured foundations of the new houses you built or laughing at me losing cementing my size two tennis shoes permanently you kept talking barely audible and began a new story (old to your wife in a day or so) about a couple of blue mules staring at one another wondering what the other is thinking and as you say they pass from enigmatic pastoral sequence to sequence like the old chicken farm of the forties i was hearing about

then i saw your blue mules in the distance stuck in a smoldering pastoral sequence shrinking trying to transfix their mode of shrinking thinking at each other and as they began to shrink you burst into song (my little beckalah) barely audible and instantly the mules disappeared the blaze the disease disappeared the shrinking the poem from some poet gone on the first note i momentarily metamorphosed you back into my grandfather not shrinking and in my suburban sequence saw you driving the bulldozer proud like a cowboy breaking the spirit of a steer pouring the last load of dirt of the last house you built.

the grey cat

7.7.90
12:03am
my white spotted cat knows i am high
docile this time of day
reading Wichita Vortex Sutra
aloud to you
asleep in the next room
Tripmaster Monkey dogeared spread open
slips off your naked chest
the high like a shot of caffeine
finds its way out through
the words i read penetrating your subconscious
"equal in nature to the Wheat
that made your bodies' muscular bones"
your bones curled next to the grey cat
against the breezy night
against a wrinkled sheet along the backs of your knees.

7.13.90
9:38pm
my black cat knows i am high
stares cool waits for me to scratch its tail
reading Baraka's Preface
trapped* *inside my psyche
to the ends of my fingernails
because you are awake
because i cannot swallow a single line
the high like death
dead from the suicide note
he left me to read

"each night I count the stars
and each night I get the same number."
your star hovers over the staid grey cat
a transmission satellite
beaming a broken signal.

Hart Schulz

Driving Home Alone

"the stars trembled like a telescope in an earthquake"
— Richard Brautigan

Driving Home Alone came out struggling to be a poem. But who can ever say what will really happen? What he got was a sharp slap in the ass to set him right. So Driving Home Alone started out to be a crusty, grumpy character. He had to learn the resignation that living brings. Now he's alright.

I first met Driving Home Alone on the highway stuck in a canyon between the towns of Walker and Bridgeport. He had been walking on the road out of Walker and was heading for the bridge in Bridgeport. The little bridge over water flowing like a strap of leather with silver studs. It was June and snow was folding over, turning brown, and dying. Snow was running down mountains like naked Indians.

I decided to name Driving Home Alone Lee Melon after my old friend Richard Brautigan, the famous writer whom I met in a market in San Jose in 1966. He made a thumbs-up gesture with his fist. Then he said, "excuse me" and angled by me toward Canned Foods. This was the only conversation we ever had. But we became the best of friends. I wonder if the old Trout Fisherman appreciated the irony of angling by me. So I named Driving Home Alone Lee Melon after Brautigan's character all bundled up inside a book I had been reading in the back of the truck. Lee Melon was a dead man stuck between the pages of an out-of-print-of-print book. If the police had pulled me over, they would have found the dead body in the back of my truck.

"May I see your license, sir?" Then they would look in the bed and see the book and the dead body of Lee Melon. They would look at Lee Melon like people look at bums in bus stations.

I could have dropped the book in the snow and it would have buried itself in the heat of Lee Melon's passion like a fiery casket. I think Brautigan was a visionary writer because he made that thumbs-up gesture in San Jose in 1966. So I named Driving Home Alone after the dead and buried and out-of-print Lee Melon.

Just past the town of Lee Vining 8 cinder cones came up in our window and looked inside. This is volcano country, I told Driving Home Alone, and I told him my story about how Mammoth Mountain would blow up like St. Helen's and it wouldn't matter if you skied or not. Nothing would matter for that matter. But Driving Home Alone would have none of it and just stared with an eyeless look on his face. For a guy who never says anything, he sure knows a lot. The kind of guy where if he did finally say something you'd probably say, "What do you mean by that, Driving Home Alone?"

For a guy who doesn't say anything, you have to hand it to him. When you're pulling at your head and screaming, "I just wish this fucking road would slow down under my wheels!" you'd look over to your side and there'd be Driving Home Alone.

The best part about the trip was stopping along the way at Convict Lake. There we were, me and Driving Home Alone, standing on a log looking over Convict Lake in the High Sierra. "Look, there's Driving Home Alone and another guy," Convict Lake might have whispered between little lines of wind waves. We looked just like a photograph at my girlfriend's house. The photograph doesn't fit in the little brass frame on top of the refrigerator. When I go over there on tuesday it looks matted with corrugated cardboard on the bottom and on one side. Then on thursday the matting has moved to the top and the other side. The picture is too small and the frame is too big. It is a photograph of her and her husband at Convict Lake, but she says it's not Convict Lake. Sometime between tuesday and thursday the two of them step sideways and down like they are dancing very, very slowly. Her husband is in fact a convict. Or he would have been if he had gone to jail for growing pot in his bedroom. The police received an

anonymous phone tip and busted him, almost making him a convict. The lake is mountain water imprisoned by the Ice Age.

It wouldn't surprise us if it wasn't Driving Home Alone who placed the call.

"Hello, police? This is an anonymous call on the Neighborhood-Watch-Watts line."

"Yes?"

"There's a man growing pot in his bedroom, a husband."

"Thank you, sir. We'll get on it right away."

When we got down to the desert it rained cats and dogs. The cats would hit first and just sit there dazed and purring in the carpet of sand. Then the dogs would hit and the cats would come to and there'd be a frenzy of cats and dogs two feet off the ground, a ball that would explode and disappear in the desert heat. Without leaving a trace. The heat had come to the party early and was just standing around like a rude relative and feasting on cat and dog hors d'oeuvres. The heat spit out some left-over fur all over the gravity-stricken carpet and it shimmered like a mirage. The sand is a prisoner of gravity, filling the place with convicts. The desert was ready for summer but summer was busy chasing brown Indians out of the mountains.

****

We slept in the back of the truck in the desert and watched my little portable black and white TV and a Joshua tree behind it. The Joshua entertained us during commercials, waving at me and Driving Home Alone with many of its furry hands. The rain stopped and the moon was gathering up evidence of the sun. Every time Driving Home Alone rolled over the moon bounced like a tetherball. By the next morning the moon had gathered so much

evidence that me and Driving Home Alone could be sure the sun was real. Case closed.

When we finally got home over the hill and into the San Fernando Valley, the stars trembled like a mirror in a thunderstorm. Each star representing a coincidence.

Lee Melon/Lee Vining

Cinder cones/Volcano Story

Convict Lake/Pot Growing Convict

The book in the back/The fact that Driving Home Alone
of the truck turned out to be a story

Even though I'd named Driving Home Alone Lee Melon, I hadn't once called him Lee Melon. The pages of the book wiggled and bent up at the edges in the back of the truck. They looked as weathered as the face of Richard Brautigan in 1966. Lee Melon is dead. So is Richard Brautigan. And I had to resign myself to the fact that Lee Melon and Driving Home Alone really are the same person. That if me and Lee Melon and Richard Brautigan and Driving Home Alone were sitting around a campfire at night in the desert, there'd only be three guys there.

Maybe even two. Or one.

Contributors:

Kathrin Breitt is a graduate of the CSUN Writing Program. She is currently living in Germany.

Annette Cenkner is an environmental biology major (in her 100th year as a senior), and is totally ruled by the animals in her house. She has been published previously in the *Northridge Review.*

David Goldschlag is Editor of *Red Dance Floor Press.* His work has appeared, or will appear, in *Direction Magazine*, *Sheila-Na-Gig* and *Protea Poetry Journal.* He frequently participates in workshops and readings in the Los Angeles area.

Kim Guthrie is a senior at CSUN, majoring in English Literature. "Ca. 240 B.C." is her first published work. She is thankful to her grandmothers, who have helped her to envision the subtle strengths of women.

Besides being a writer, **Marion Heyn** is, among other things, an alien from the True North, a damn good cook, an English teacher, a graduate student, a novice gardener, an organization freak, somewhat neurotic, and perpetually tired. But she is having a fine time.

Helen Laurence is working towards an M.A. in the Writing Program at CSUN after many years away from graduate school at the University of Oregon. During those years came children, weaving, yoga, writing (always), sign language interpreting and teaching. She works at Sequoyah School in Pasadena, where she loves teaching creative writing. She has published some poems, and does readings around the L.A. area. She plans to teach in college and move back to Oregon.

Alexandra Mathews, a psychology major at CSUN, admits to a mostly neurotic fixation on her three children, who are all, incidentally, cats. Having cats, she says, has provided her and her husband with an aggrouping trepidation regarding having actual human offspring, due to the seamless perfection of the personalities of their

felines. She is currently working on dispelling her fear of the potential disappointments she may face in the future regarding procreating.

Anita M. E. Moore is a senior English major in the Writing Program at CSUN.

Jeremy Nave has studied English and philosophy at UC Santa Cruz and CSUN. He has been writing poetry for over five years. Upon graduating, Jeremy will continue to write and teach. His poetry has been influenced by Kenneth Patchen, William Stafford, Rainer Maria Rilke, and Allen Ginsberg. He is currently working on a compilation of poems.

Katherine Petit was born in Burbank, California, and has previously published poetry in *Direction Magazine* and *Diario Latino*, an El Salvadoran publication in El Salvador.

Tracy Putirka received her B.A. in English from CSUN. She is currently teaching ninth-grade English, and recently she received an Honorable Mention from L.A.P.C. Community Services Fifth Annual Writers' Conference. "The Tooth Fairy" is her first published poem.

Stephanie Rioux is a junior religious studies major. She was first published in the Northridge Review, Fall 1990.

Andy Rivera will graduate from CSUN in the summer of 1991, and hopes to pursue an M.F.A. in creative writing.

Scott Sandler has had several stories published in the *Northridge Review*. He won the Helen Helms Marcus Award in 1990. These are his first published poems.

David Sandler is a graduate student in clinical psychology at CSUN. He took up writing as a hobby, as a senior, in a creative writing class. He thanks his teacher, Eloise Klein Healy, for her support and encouragement, and especially his brother, Scott, for being the motivation and inspiration behind his writing. "The Jerseymaid Ritual" is his first published story.

Fiction is new to **Hart Schulz**. He was just published in *Zyzzyva*, and is looking for a publisher for his novel, The Kittens of August.

Daniel Slosberg studies English at CSUN, and lives with his wife and cat in Santa Monica.

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