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VOLUME 2, ISSUE 2

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SUBMISSION GUIDELINES

THE NEXT ANGLE DEADLINE IS JANUARY 25, 2002 BY 5:00 P.M.

All submissions must be sent to angle@sjfc.edu, as a Word attachment.

WE ARE NO LONGER ACCEPTING HARD COPY SUBMISSIONS.

The following submission guidelines must be followed for every issue. All pieces must:

1. Be typed (space according to your preference).

2. Include a cover letter which contains the author's name, address (campus or off-campus), phone number (home and work), and the title(s) of the piece(s) submitted.

3. DO NOT include your name or personal information on your submissions.

4. Contain 1 work per page only if writing a poem or haiku.

5. All submissions, including short stories, should not exceed three typed pages.

Regrettably, we are unable to accept any piece that does not follow these guidelines. If you have any questions concerning submission guidelines, please contact the editors at angle@sjfc.edu. Thank you!

You may submit pictures, drawings, photography, and computer generated images as well as many other types of artistic expressions.

**All submissions are judged anonymously.
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ANN-MARIE DOYLE
ANGLE 2001

AWARDS

FIRST PRIZE
Nikisha S. Johnson.............The Last Seat Left

SECOND PRIZE
Imecca (E) Rodriguez...........The Rice and Bean Ghosts

THIRD PRIZE
William Panara..............The Old Mattress

ART PRIZE
Ann-Marie Doyle
we sit
in the middle
of this restaurant
the last seat left

in the center of this town
that he was once proud to call home
my head resting on the filthy counter
not caring
whether the dried sliver of ketchup
left for 3 days
or two weeks
finds its way into my hair
as i attempt to hold back
the tears of hatred and disbelief
these random people
with blank faces
snicker and stare
at my curly hair
and tan face
wondering why
i am sitting
with
America’s
blue eyed poster child
who doesn’t quite understand
the dynamics
of a society
in which love
comes in colors.
When Her Grandmother died
She felt a split
The rice and beans  -from-  the collard greens.
The fried chicken  -from-  the platanos mas duros.

Anyways
She had always hated ensalada de papas.
When her Grandmother died,
She took a piece of Her with Her.
La India . . . Boriqua Taino . . . Indian---Spirit.

It died . . . too.
Though it would . . .
Rise, Rise, Rise! day
And night.

She fought with her inner spirits.
Mother in search of love.
Father in search of freedom.
She was searchin' for a clue.
A clue, to why she was born.
What she was to do.

So.
She danced
And She sang
Then She beat-boxed and spoke Slang
. . . Dang
. . . Dang
. . . Growing Pangs
. . . Then
One day . . .

¿Adonde estan mis arroz y habichuelas?
¿Y mis chicharrones de pollo, donde estan?
¿Aye, bueno, y mis platanos mas duros?
¿Donde? ¿ Donde?
¿Viste mi abuelita?

Ah, si. Dile a ella que quiero hablar con ella cuando tenga tiempo.

Oh how long it has been since she ate pork-cured collard greens, Her other Grandmother doesn’t even make them anymore. And nobody learned to make pasteles.
Before it was burned to dust
the old mattress lay in a coyote grave
back behind the trees.
They had it taken from
a rusty red dumpster
filled with must and maggots
perched on the concrete
like a sick bird.
They dragged the dead bed back behind the park.

They wanted to pretend
it was a great white castle
and he could be the prince and she could be the maiden.
He was seven and she was six
And they were draped in innocence.

The mattress sat exhausted.
Left in the damp air to rot
skin turning a rotten banana yellow
stinking of mildew and mold.

Morning.
The smell of rain in the air
the sky dyed blue.
They found broken beer bottles and cigarette butts
all around their castle
and they asked each other,
“What strange things we have missed?”

Night.
They went out together
found some older kids – drinking
two of each sex
splattered across their castle like wet mud
stripping down to the bare backbone
bodies twisting and turning
and pumping and smacking and clapping
the girls on their backs –tou a vous–
while the men slithered and coiled inside.
And they watched.

The children never spoke about what they’d seen because it was their white castle under attack and all of the good and the clean were beheaded and burned. And when they would touch or kiss they would always see their desire as a dirty old mattress sitting out in the rain.

DANNY UEBBING
Subtraction, Truth
Corn Hill, Rochester, NY, early autumn

"Even though it seems like adding . . . poetry is subtracting."
   — Li-Young Lee

I go downtown
between Main and Court
to see the poet

of silence. He speaks
of apocalypse—this mode of uncovering—
our duty as artists.

I concede,
taking the wrong turn
home.

In the midst of this war
I get lost in Corn Hill, an early
part of this city. I have

no idea where I am, no way
to find East Avenue
again, lost in neighborhoods

which exist only because
I’ve gotten lost in them.
I concede, Li-Young, I agree

wholeheartedly. Here, somewhere
in the belly of Fitshugh, I know
you are right. This is the point:

the peeling away, layers
like delicate, sunburned skin
Each shaving wrinkling

beneath my hard hands, my fingers
burning with touch.
The excavation

of what is presumed
lost, missing, dead.
MARCIA DODGE

UNTITLED

The world is ever-changing, turning
Hope
Waiting for the cutter to carve that perfect piece
A mistake
Shards of glass
Nothing

ANGELA MERADJI

YOU’RE NOT IT.

“. . . until I find the right one. And you’re not it.”
My blood freezes up,
but my palms grow sweaty,
As I lay naked next to him, the curves of my breasts presses against his chest.
I want to lash out, to smack him and grab my clothes, run for the door, and leave
his bed, his laugh, his perfect hair . . . his life.
But I lay there still. smiling if I have not just given him a piece of myself.
Why are his kisses so hungry?
his hands so rough?
    demanding more, but shutting me out.
    making me feel like the bad one . . . dirty, tainted, unpure.
    . . . too foreign, no religion . . .

“Someday a man will love you like a princess.”
But not this man, not this day.
RITA NAUMAN

THE DARK

The light streaming from the kitchen is just enough to discover your curious eye, like mossy places underneath bridges. But we find delight in the dark and turn the light off. Water drips easily from the sink. I watched as your calves flexed down to your tapered ankles when you went to fix it, the bone on your heel jetting out like a spur. You return to me, lay your head on my chest, and nudge your shoulder into my body to remind me that you like to be petted. I find the place in your back that remembers my touch. You snuggle deeper into my curves and remain there, always there, happy.

A. L. HIGHAM
Einar Jónsson's Birth of Psyche
Dusk falls upon the landscape,
Sliding with a purpose behind the trees.
Loneliness encompasses the cloud shadows
That are casting a blue haze over the evening.
Blankets of denial suffocate,
Disguising the fact that his wife is gone.
If he looks hard enough into the setting sun
He can see her, if only for a fraction of a second.
She is alive again.
A blue gray fog that he can breathe in
And know that he isn’t truly alone
On desolate roads, going nowhere quickly;
Head long into forever, to find
That she still
Is not there with him.
That she still
Is prisoner to the mortality that made her human.
That she still
Is the force in the night that wakes him like magic
To that lonely pillow that once held her curls,
Her cheek, her lips
That held the slight sounds of slumber
Now preserved in this cotton fabric.
If he presses his ear up tight enough,
He can hear the pillow echo her name, her breath, her slumber.
For now, the moon drops behind the trees at twilight.
My favorite numbers are 1, 6, and 7.
I like them any way you put them together.
For example, why don’t we make it 7, 1, and 6?
It just seems so natural, doesn’t it?
Especially in this area.
We could almost use it as a code of sorts.
To let people know that this is where we are from.

Numbers that I don’t like are 5 and 8.
I especially don’t like them when one is doubled.
For example, let’s make it 5, 8, and 5.
It just doesn’t work for me.
The numbers are too high, and it has no representation.
They are just different.

Wondering what I’m talking about?
Look me up in the new phone book and you’ll understand.
Change isn’t always a good thing.
Wearing my dust stained red boots,  
with my jeans tucked in,  
my leather belt with a horse on the buckle,  
a black shirt,  
and the purple and white cowboy hat  
that my mom bought me at the rodeo—

From our stable’s  
two cold steel bars  
with just enough room for me  
to weave through  
and hold on . . .  
I remember watching my mom ride—

Magic  
his silky burnt orange coat  
painting the sunset,  
his white marked hooves  
flashing through the kaleidoscopes of colors  
sparkling off the dust scattering around her,  
looking like him—  
Magic

Hours and hours  
holding on,  
I’d watch her ride . . .  
every night looking the same—  
purple shades of mountains  
and the feeling of dirt on my skin,  
not like sand that brushed off  
under the same pale blue sky  
smeared with oranges, reds and pinks  
stretching out the space around me—

Smells of warm air and soft wind  
playing with my hat,  
relaxing my excited heart—  
I’d sit for hours just like this,  
watching her disappear over the hills.
ALEXIS SPECK

A Mother’s Tool

The sun so focused,
Rays splashing their faces,
Giving light.
Brushing through hair,
Golden tangled twine,
The dark oak comb, pulling through the mess,
Stuck..

Thoughts of yesterday,
Sit unmoved,
She can’t explain,
To the green eyed child,

It takes time,
To untangle the unwanted,
With pain, mother’s tool pulls.

VALERIE STACKMAN

Old House

Old, black, bruised bananas on the counter,
aprons over the stove,
she ate peaches like apples
and no one really knew her identity.

She was never glamorous,
but had a language that could put you on the turf,
box.

Boxes and boxes full of lost things,
she was a hypocrite
who danced around her words.
He used to listen to
Cat Steven's Moon Shadow
on repeat.
It would play,
incessantly play,
reminding me of a ringing
alarm clock
when all you want to do is sleep.

He said the song is kinetic,
and it made him feel alive—
like pain, like rain, or yellow roses—
He told me that when the notes erupted,
he could look into the mirror
and see the whole world
within his reflection.
MEGAN HERRMAN

IN ARMS

I made you listen to Willie Nelson
as your drove along smiling with your hand on my knee.
I wore a Lily of France Pink Flaming Dress, with
a tiny blue barrette and red stained lips.

We pretended to be guests at Opryland,
and drank frozen margaritas at the hotel bar—
surrounded by genuine cowboys and cowgirls—
complete with boots, hats, and fringe.

We ate dinner in Nashville
at a restaurant where the menu consisted entirely of fondue.
Cheese fondue, Chocolate fondue,
How fond I was of you.

That night we lay in the field
with our backs against the damp grass,
we watched shooting stars,
and fell asleep wrapped in arms.
KEVIN AUBREY

A DAY IN THE LIFE

MAN and WOMAN enter through door from left holding hands. There is a couch and a coffee table set up in the middle of the room. Suddenly MAN embraces WOMAN and dips her deeply as if they were dancing and speaks.

MAN: (in thick english accent) Hello darling, I noticed you from across the room and was trying to figure out where you have been all of my life, may I have this dance?

WOMAN: (giggling, in attempted accent) Sorry sir, but I have but one rule in life and that is such: I do not dance with . . . (breaking from accent) FREAKS!! (With this WOMAN breaks from his arms and jumps away giggling.)

MAN: What are you talking about? I’m no freak, you are the one that smells funny, is that Enthralling Embrace or Passionflower of the Sun goddess, or one of those other exotic chick scented lotions with the goofy harlequin names. Call me a freak, (smiling) why don’t you make yourself useful woman and go into the kitchen where you belong and make me a damn sandwich!

WOMAN: I got your sandwich right here buster!

(WOMAN punches MAN then retreats away again, MAN pursues and once catching her, flips her over his shoulder and starts lumbering around stage grunting and brandishing a rolled up newspaper like a caveman’s club. This does not last long however because WOMAN proceeds to start giving MAN a wedgie. With a playful spank he puts her down again and adjusts his pants grinning.)

MAN: Why do you smell funny anyway?

WOMAN: I guess my other boyfriend’s cologne rubbed off on me.

MAN: HaHa, very cute, you’re hilarious, (advancing towards her) give me a kiss.

WOMAN: (advancing towards MAN) No! (She smiles as he reaches her and as she tries to kiss him, he pulls away at the last second.)

MAN: I’m sorry miss, I can’t do this. I can’t cheat on my wife. The kids will never forgive me! I don’t even know your name! (grinning heavily as WOMAN smacks him on the arm and starts to pull him towards her, he proceeds to yell) Help! Help! (quieter now) Rape! (looking into her eyes) This is sexual harassment and I don’t have to take . . . (he is cut off in mid sentence as they kiss.)
WOMAN: You are too much! (giggling)

MAN: Nope, I'm just enough. (He pulls her towards him and they stand forehead to forehead. She pulls away and rolls her eyes)

WOMAN: (sarcastically) Wow and funny too, what a catch. How did I ever get so lucky? I must have lost a bet with god.

MAN: Aha touché. (smiling) You are so cute (pausing). It's too bad I can't remember your name. Samantha? Judy? Elizabeth? I got nothing....

WOMAN: (laughing) Ass! (She goes and kisses him again.)

MAN: (sarcastically) Ewwww gross!

WOMAN: Whatever you love it, you ready to go now jackass?

MAN: Yeah, can I drive so we make it there in one piece, miss "I have plenty of room to get over and I didn't really cut them off"?

WOMAN: You keep picking on me and you won't make the car!

MAN: I know it's strange for you driving, 'cause you are out of your natural realm of the kitchen, but I believe you can be taught!, (pausing) I think. (MAN swats WOMAN playfully on the backside again and he takes off running stage left)

WOMAN: (rushing to gather her purse) You run like a PANSY!

(MAN yells something from offstage, but you cannot make out what he says. It obviously infuriates WOMAN as she starts running towards the door and yelling.)

WOMAN: (laughing) You are so far beyond screwed, you can't catch a bus back to screwed! (With that she exits through door stage left.)

Curtain.
DAVID J. LANDERS

DINNERS THAT WILL NEVER, EVER, EVER BE

Have you ever dug somebody so far beyond your reach, so superior to you, that you didn't know what to say or do when you were around them? Then, when they do pay attention to you, you just feel like passing out, but instead, you gnaw the skin on the end of your fingers off and look like an idiot. And you would just like to ask them if they would like to go to dinner sometime, but you know that you never will, because you're scared of getting laughed at . . . or turned down . . . or kicked in the nuts (that would hurt). I have.

What if I did ask her out to dinner, though? We'd probably go to Denny's or some other greasy burger place. You shouldn't get too formal on the first date, right? I would get the Big Texas Barbeque Burger . . . She would probably get a Chicken Fajita. The two of us would stay until long after midnight, discussing the world. We'd discuss our beliefs, take a bite out of our food, our friends, take another bite out of our food. I'm sure that, at some point, a bit of that delicious, spicy, maroon colored barbeque sauce would drip off of the burger and fall with a splat onto the table. Maybe she would giggle and be forced to cover her mouth so the fajita wouldn't spill out. After our little laughing session, we'd get back to our food and the repetitions . . . eat, talk, eat, talk.

I have, several times, thought about what the perfect dinner would consist of. Friendly smiles mixed with flashing eyes mixed with subtle hinting. "So, what are you doing tomorrow?", she may ask, to which I may reply, "I'm not sure. What are you doing tomorrow?" How pathetic can you get?

One of these days, maybe I will ask her to accompany me to the perfect dinner. If this happens, I will be dragged into an oblivion of light, where I couldn't stop smiling for days. Then, I'd be so happy that not even life could bring me down. I believe this is referred to as being "Twidderpated." That's what I want. Greasy Denny's food . . . and twidderpation.
RICHARD MAULFAIR

OLD BLUE

life is these jeans
wrinkled to my body
tough to the world
but frayed at the bottom

life is blue
prewashed for style
with big pockets
for lots of baggage

life is comfortable
sometimes torn
often faded
but always blue

DIANDRA LYNCH

MY STORY

after Wendy Jean Birch

My feet tell my story
the hundreds of miles they’ve tread
on beaches mountains and stones
small and slender creamy white
hold me up support me
like mother like father
lead me though darkness and light
stumble over rough spots slip through the slippery mud
straw slashed cuts from the fields of my youth
and rocks climbing blisters
remind me forever of where I have been.
THIS PAGE HAS BEEN REMOVED ON REQUEST OF THE AUTHOR
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MEGAN HERRMAN

MUSTANG SALLY

I am a risk taker, a fly by the seat of my pants kind of girl. It’s the day to day things that are far more precarious and harder to convince myself to try. I don’t want to ignore those boys I see throwing rocks at turtles. I’m not going to pretend to like ice cream, or for that matter, you. I’m not going to censor myself from saying those words you don’t like. I’m going to stand up and scream, “shut up you goddamn mother . . .” I’m not going to sit here any longer. I’m going to grab your fist and catch it before it collides. I will silence your criticism and negativity before it shatters. And do you want to know why? Because I am a risk taker, a fly by the seat of my pants kind of girl, and I, Mustang Sally, am going to take you for a ride.

A. L. HIGHAM.........Icelandic Sculpture Garden
It was an overcast night, storm clouds gathering in the distance
The cool, autumn winds whipped through the air,
Blowing the recently fallen yellow leaves and red leaves around,
Like a tornado of crisp color.

The smell of fall was evident in the air
So strong you could almost taste it,
Intertwining with the moist air
A harbinger of rain to come.

A harbinger of change.

This fall has been different than falls past.
There was something . . . missing.
There was a feeling upon waking up,
A feeling that something wasn’t complete.

As I look up through the wisps of fogs,
Snaking across the grounds like tendrils,
And the patches of dark clouds,
I catch the glimmer of pale, distant starts.

The glimmer of your eyes.

I once wrote you that “if I could hold a star
For each time you’ve made me smile,
The entire night sky would be in the palm of my hand.”
This night reminded me of that

As do your eyes, as they glitter like a shining star,
So full of life, of love, a love I know.
You are never out of my thoughts.
If only I could show you.

If only I could show you.

Show you that we may not have everything ourselves,
But together, together we have it all.
With tired eyes and a weary heart I wait,
I hope for another chance.
I close my eyes hoping when I open them
I’ll find myself two years past,
Just about to find everything that I’ve always wanted
Just about to find you.
NIKISHA S. JOHNSON

THE ROOF

I.

gravel
biting
young
knees
ripping flesh
muffled cry
swift thrust
hot night
dirty girl
proud man

II.

same gravel
licking
knees
whispering
street words
for love
promising
a beautiful child
delivering
nothing
but scars.
WAVES

Waves crashing against the bank of the pier
I sit here with you and ponder over what we are.
On the pale gray rocks we sit, summer is here
This is one of the best times I’ve had by far.

It is not upsetting, the way you looked at me then
With your mossy green, mysterious eyes.
It is not sad that we sat in darkness
And only listened to the sounds of the midnight blue seawater.

It was not busy with people talking,
The sounds of the waves covered their voices.
I stared into the black night sky, wondering what I would become;
Would I be safe, would I be happy?

Now in the warm and humid night I question
Have I taken you for granted, or is it the other way around?
Friends no more are saying, “aww, how cute,”
But rather, “oh great, again, here we go.”

No more do I want this feeling of suffocation
It is clipping my wings and smothering me too much.
Once again I wish, we could go back to being
As free and open a the waves on the lake.
Meg Barboza

In Bloom

Hutchison Road, University of Rochester, early spring
(for Francis)

We always walk
like that--two trees who teeter
towards one another
in the breeze.
Your shade and my shade
overlap, make silence
in our wake.
Following behind
our friends on the way
to dinner, it’s later
than I would like it to be.
And you are closer
than I would like
you to be--whispering
thoughts in broken Russian,
hands in pockets, not daring
to turn too far
in either direction.
This gentle flirting
on melted down pathways is
like a ticklish finger
on my kneecap, or your head
bowed gently to my shoulder
in fatigue. And no one sees this
but us, or me, or the pink
flowering branches above
whose tongues aren’t
yet awake, and who will
keep this secret
once we’ve made it
safely to the car.
You've given up your whole life to become the person you are right now. Was it worth it?
- Richard Bach

One day, you might wake up and realize you've become someone. Realize you've become someone you didn't think you would become. And you might wonder at all the idiosyncrasies you've developed, where they came from and what they mean. You might wonder how you got here, to this place in your life, to be this person that you are; and you might start to make connections between who you were and what happened to her, and who you have become. You might remember your childhood in faint, ambiguous terms.

You might remember that where you grew up, you could play a whole game of tennis in the street before a single car came to intrude. That you could look across the road and see the house your dad grew up in and walk up the big, sloping hill to the site of his one room schoolhouse, right next to what used to be sacred burial grounds and is now a white man's cemetery. You might recall how you measured distance by fields and made landmarks of barns and large piles of rock that never moved. These might tell you about your desire for permanency and your resistance to change.

You might think about how time was told by the height of the sun, and a converted Greyhound Bus worked as a camper for the motley crew you called your kin. About how there was no key for the door and no need for one. And how everyone knew everyone else. Or maybe about how they planted trees for their children each time one was born and knew they'd be there to see them grow. You might recall how you watched your grandfather's barn erode, till one night a storm ripped off its roof and threw its thick frame into the deserted road. You might realize how these have formed both your vulnerabilities and your strengths.

You might recall how a neighbor passing by might carry your fragile frame to the door if you crawled into the road while your mom was inside on the telephone. How they would never have thought to threaten to call the police. How you could sit in the field for hours on end, wondering if your Irish ancestors stole this land directly from the natives, who are also your ancestors, or on the sly in some twisted treaty and feeling the air grow tighter with each new speck of understanding. You could wonder what this land once held and if the bones of the past are really buried as deep as they seem to be.
This might be indicative of your current duality and lack of connection with any one culture, any one thought.

You might remember that finding an arrowhead was a common occurrence and making necklaces out of a people's weapons seemed okay. That buffalo often danced across the sky in painted clouds. That they dug up that land on top of the hill, searching for clues of the Seneca village, which stood there long ago. How they named it Ganogarro until they realized they were using the wrong dialect and they quickly and quietly changed it to Ganondagon. How you lived down the hill from people you were related to half your life and never knew it. This might indicate your reluctance to identify yourself as American Indian, not because you would be embarrassed, but because you have been raised white.

You might remember that the alleys downtown contained wrought iron benches and were planted with espaliered flowers. That the brick laid a hundred years before peeked through the balding pavement at the corner of Maple Avenue and Main Street. You might remember how the ancient buildings, trailed with ivy, still clung to the ink that branded them a century ago and how much like people they really were. You might remember that fields and creek beds, dry or flowing, were the most common hangouts for the youth. You might wonder if this constructed your penchant for water and open space and your hatred of asphalt.

And you might remember the mantras about skeletons in the closet and not hanging your dirty laundry out in public. About how you worried that your mother's hands could be wrung only so many times before the skin began to wear away and the bones began to show. You might remember how things were never really as safe as they seemed. How your friends were much more likely to kill themselves than be killed, but both happened. You might remember your realization that small towns can steal your soul away without any hint of it being in danger. And you might wonder if this resulted in your refusal to accept appearances, rather than truth.

This might remind you how surprised you were to realize that many people outside New York think the whole state is a city and how surprised they are that you don't have an accent, don't own a gun, and don't know what they think you should know; about dark seedy alleys and muggings in broad daylight and taxis and how many blocks it takes to get somewhere. How they are surprised when you tell them you spent half your childhood in massive fields, catching bullfrogs, and the other half wondering why they didn't plant a tree for you. And you might wonder if this is what drove you to the city.

You might remember how you lived, for a while, on Court Street in Syracuse.
Where the only sounds you heard more than gunfire was traffic and the only time you heard a child laugh was when you tickled the one in your arms. Where people left their children with you for an afternoon and they ended up staying for six months. Or the one bedroom apartment on Butternut with your ex-fiancé, his mother, her boyfriend and his crack head uncle, packed in like sardines, realizing privacy was a luxury you had taken for granted. Where you could never figure out whether it was worse to hear that baby crying from that dark window every day as you walked to work or worse when it cried no more. This might explain why you never look strangers in the eye and you don't laugh as loudly as you used to.

You might remember the homeless shelter in downtown Rochester, right across from a nightclub called Heaven, in which you would stand upon the roof at night and watch the normal people pay their dues to dance the night away. Where you had to wander the streets every day looking for a job and receive blank stares when you filled the address line in with 90 Liberty Pole Way. Or the economical housing you lived in on Carter Street in North Carolina, also known as Crack Central, where you got so used to the noise that you couldn't fall asleep for weeks when you moved back home to that small town in New York and the sound of a cigarette burning was enough to put you on edge. Or that beautiful, Victorian apartment in Rochester in a questionable neighborhood with obnoxious downstairs neighbors who beat their dogs, threw ethnic slurs up the heating vents, and swore constantly, and neurotic roommates who were once your friends and are no longer. This might tell you why you always lock the door and why you never completely trust anyone anymore.

Or how you lived at your sister's house in North Carolina where the air conditioning saved your life when you went two weeks past your due date in the middle of a heat wave, and in which time you became addicted to cable television. In your sister's husband's office, on a futon in the corner, waiting tables by day and babysitting nights, wondering about life and trying to learn from somebody else's mistakes and not create your own. And at your sister's house in Farmington, in a room that had particleboard for walls, where your daughter lay in a cradle handed down through all the grandchildren and you dreamed of painting her world in sun-warmed colors. This might account for your love of your family even with their many quirks and quandaries.

You might think of how you now live in a little flat above a barbershop in East Rochester with your newly acquired husband and your precocious daughter, where the windows rattle every time a train goes by and the heating bill climbs higher every day. You might realize how much you long to own a house, something you would have never dreamed of a couple years ago because you were always going to get out of here. You
might wake up one day and realize you've become too interwoven into your surroundings and too attached to your family and too invested in the life you've made to trade it all in.

You might realize you are not going to move to Colorado or New Mexico or Japan as soon as you save up enough money. That you are not going to join the Peace Corps or a traveling actors group or the circus. That you are going to stay here and continue to go to all the family functions, be there for all the new babies and the birthdays and the funerals. That you are going to be here to take your father to the doctor and watch your sister's kids and get together for any reason you can create and go sledding in a large motley pile of scarves and mittens and laughter.

You might wake up one day, play connect the dots with your life, find out how you came to be here, wonder at the complexity of it all, unearth your unknown reactions, grieve for other paths not taken and realize you've become someone you didn't think you'd become. You might do all these things, all the while thinking how depressing it is to be a broke college student with a five-year-old daughter at the age of 26, and wind up realizing that you are happy.