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Trailer Earthquake

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Cover Page Footnote

This poem is available in The Angle: http://fisherpub.sjfc.edu/angle/vol2006/iss2/17
There are times
when the barriers between the world
and you
seem so flimsy and thin.

The night I swept the floor
in our little house-trailer
Gathering crumbs of bread and dirt,
Pieces of spit-out food, dust bunnies
All gathered in by the long reach of a corn broom
A soft whooshing sound as broom-strands hit vinyl tile
a neat pile taking shape.

I pulled the chairs out from the table,
one by one,
Stopping to read a magazine
that lay open on the table’s edge.
Full of stories that happened
far away from my trailer-house
on my muddy road
in my tiny town
The broom still in my hand.

I read about lives of newsworthy people,
Watching the late spring sun shine though the dust motes
Quietly.
Children all asleep, the evening turning silent,
When the floor started shaking,
Undulating softly beneath me.
The walls began to shudder gently
Then harder
As some determined force
Shook our home like we were in the spin cycle of a washer.
Windows cracked, dishes clattered
I held on to the broom tightly
Steadied myself on the table

Then, slowly, the shaking grew less,
subsided until there was only the shaking in my knees left.
It was then I knew
All that lay between me and a bottomless chasm in the earth
Was a few inches of aluminum,
Pressboard flooring and some tiny wires
Suspended on eight cinderblocks
In the mud.

That was it.
After that, the place never seemed quite whole,
Never seemed able to keep out the elements
The wind, snow, rain, or sun
All that stood between us and all that
Was that flimsy aluminum skin.