

1.

1954 Magnolia Street is a warm
neighborly slice of peach pie America.
The milkman delivers on Mondays and Thursdays
leaving fresh milk and creamy cottage cheese
in our battered old milkbox on the front porch.

Bottles clatter into the rack,
my signal to run outside and pat Chris,
lumbering old dappled milkwagon puller
who stands patiently between stops
indifferent to umpteen small hands
fingers pawing at his velvet composure.

Like Gene Kelly, but without the rain,
the milkman leaps into the back of the wagon
ice pick skillfully chipping away
at giant blocks that keep the cold,
passing little chunks into eager
innocent palms and winning us all
with this ritual generosity.

My best friend Sharon
who lives six houses down
calls the milkman: *Uncle Giles*
and tells me they have secrets.
When I play at her house
he sometimes visits
bringing a rainbow of popsicles,
gifts for small coquettish favors.
We giggle each time he tells us
to kiss him on the lips when ours
all icy cold and childish
taste of lime or strawberry or orange.
He says he likes that.
Her mom doesn't care
about our silly games,
after all, we are only
six years old.

2.

When we are grown
Sharon kills herself
in alcoholic despair.
Her mother is arrested
for ordering things
through the mail
and never paying for them.
The police say she sells the stuff
to support her heroin habit,
which explains the midday dungeon,
her long shadow draping the couch,
a perfect closed casket escape from
the world of housewife tedium.

On little girl tiptoes
hushed we flew the stairs
to her brother's room
snuggled into his big attic closet
closed the door and undisturbed
read comic books for hours.
Once, Sharon pulled back his bed covers
to show me a monster yellow stain.
How odd to be 12 and still wet the bed.
But he had the biggest stack of comics I ever saw
I think his mom got them through the mail.