



[Home](#)

[Winter-Fall 2012-2013](#)

[Summer-Fall 2012](#)

[Spring-Summer 2012](#)

[Autumn-Winter 2011-12](#)

[Summer 2011](#)

[Winter/Spring 2011](#)

[Autumn/Winter 2011](#)

[Summer 2010](#)

[Spring 2010](#)

[Winter 2010](#)

[Autumn 2009](#)

[Summer 2009](#)

[Spring 2009](#)

[Autumn 2008](#)

[Summer 2008](#)

[Spring/Summer 2008](#)

[Winter/Spring 2008](#)

[Editor's Note](#)

[Guidelines](#)

[Contact](#)

Three Poems

By Krista Surprenant

Seminole County, Florida

A girl tiptoes through a crowded room still, dark.

The blue, yellow and red neon of the \$65 per week motel sign
filter through cracks
of faded flowered curtains.
Her jeans and Mickey Mouse t-shirt hang next to the bathtub
in hopes that steam from the shower will freshen them.

She writes her name in the foggy mirror revealing fragments
of her freckled face.

Her mother uses the dresser to make breakfast
with day old bread and tossed aside tangerines
from the Chinese restaurant across the street.
The peels perfume the stuffy air.

Her father sits on the edge
of the only bed,
making a sign:
Family of Five to Feed.
His new job.

Her older brother lies wrapped
in a quilt on the floor.
He will look for work today
instead of going to school.

The girl wonders if her family could be better
without her.

She combs water through her mousy brown hair
smoothing it.
A yellow ribbon frames her face.
She pauses at the mirror seeing pieces
of her family in the reflection
like glass figurines,
small and fragile.

She slips on scuffed sneakers,
walks through the damp parking lot at dawn
joining the others
in line
waiting for the bus to school.

Planting Paper Flowers

Riding home on the bus--

she gazed at the wide verandas overflowing with blooms.

She sank into the leathery green seat
waiting for her stop:
a faded house, with a tattered screen door.

A quarter, two dimes and one penny,
clinked from a faded, chipped piggy bank.
Not enough for seeds, even from the Dollar Discount.

Spying brown grocery bags in the open pantry,
she set to work.
An old Crayola box held six broken crayons.
The yellow crayon ground down,
created the centers that held
petals.
Toothpicks, Popsicle sticks and pencils:
the stems.

Cultivating her garden,
purple iris, pink pansies, blue violets.
The dull dirt was now vibrant.

A red clay pot cracked
in a variety of sizes and shapes of shards:
a fancy border to contain the beds.

She imagined-- sipping honey tea and eating fresh berries in her
regal garden.
Passersby honked their horns in appreciation.

Sitting in the Classroom

Defiance written on her face.
This hard look was well rehearsed
for a crowd. She sat
in a chair that supported
her with its embrace.
Clips neatly held tight
to raven flowing hair.
She did not waver
her voice.
Years of
parents arguing, a
sick brother, and
always wanting had left her
tough to this world.
An icy appearance was
her guard.

In her lilac room
her eyes wandered up
beyond the posters, and through the curtains
to the moving clouds where she
loosened the clips,
was still,
while tears streaked
her face.

Krista Surprenant is a debut author. She received her BA in Psychology from Gettysburg College and is currently completing her MFA in Writing from Albertus Magnus College. She is a member of SCBWI. She has previously had articles published as a parenting/education columnist for her local online newspaper, *The Patch*. She is an eighth grade teacher of reading and writing in Norwalk, Connecticut. She currently resides in North Branford, Connecticut where she spends her spare time with her amazingly supportive husband and her two beautifully inspiring and energetic sons.

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