

A Garden of Pathos · *Rebekah Remington*

Where cats and tomatoes once flickered
a man with cancer of the larynx mows the lawn
for five bucks. The clothespoles are still there,
double T's, now that the line is gone,
and the sparrows' sleep, and dancer
linens. I can't remember the words
I invented then, but a chain
of them goes on now like my teen-age body years ago
in the face-to-face mirrors of a dressing room:
trouble, Tod, and tough luck . . . time
itself is not so awful. I try to remember
this. I try to remember childhood
has its own tragedies. The plywood tea house
scattered in the mud after a late summer
storm, our mud-spattered dolls, their blank
and gelid eyes, so stunned it could happen.
That we would let it happen. Or the sad
procession after the cat died.
Even the crones bowed. Lonnie, my twin glance
and tag-a-long, carried her loss
in the clouded words "complications of childbirth."
One night, a new neighbor found her lying back
between two garbage bins in the alley,
her sly and vagrant eyes camouflaged among Orion
and street-lit shards of beer bottles,
her whiskeyed breath all that was left of dew.
She'd hardly know me now.
"She's ok, got a job at the subshop, and boys,"
the neighbor tells me. "And what can you expect,
her granny with Alzheimer's?" I drag
the cement birdbath to the truck, parting
the grass in a last wake. He says he's sorry
he never knew my mother. We talk about blue-

collar sell outs and cryptic government loans,
as the mower sprays a confetti of fresh cut.
Farther up the street, a girl rakes a title
from the billboard of the Boulevard cinema, letter by letter.