

Childhood Place

I avoided the steps of my school,
Thoreau Park Elementary
even when no one was there.

If I walked my dog
when teenagers gathered there
I stayed far away.
If I didn't hear them jeering at me
I didn't have to pretend to ignore them.

Far into the night
in my house across the street
I listened to the teenagers laugh and scream.

Once I sneaked out to explore
when my parents weren't home to forbid it.
A smell struck behind my eyes,
a sweet food smell perverted by stomach acid.

Cigarette butts dotted the cracked cement.
Broken bottles lay along the wall
adjoining the playground, sticky hip level
streams glistening on the bricks.

Unspeakable painted words
accused me of undiscovered sins.

Lucia P. May
Originally published in Paperdarts, July 2011