

When I Was Young In the Suburbs

by Christina Canalizo

When I was young in the suburbs,
there was an empty lot across from our house.
Bulldozers cleared the trees, shredded the bushes,
and piled mounds of dirt
three times as tall as I.

But they never built a house.
The dirt mounds, chain-link fences, and neon signs
were left standing in the vacant wind,
and the bulldozers never returned.

When I was young in the suburbs,
my brother and I
would tiptoe through the cactus fields
and cross over to the empty lot.

We would dart behind the dirt mounds,
popping our cap guns and shooting our pistols and shouting,
and my brother would rev his go-kart
as we leapt from mound-to-mound.

When I was young in the suburbs,
there was an empty lot
which dissolved into the Wild West, an African plain,
or the Rocky Mountains,
forming a stage for our adventures.

We carried our toys through the dirt mounds
and tugged along a red wagon

with Daisy, our Basset Hound,
howling in approval.

When I was young in the suburbs,
my brother and I
would return home with blackened knees
and grass stains on our shirts.

My mother would welcome us
with a steaming bowl of Kraft Mac & Cheese,
Velveeta Shells, or Chef Boyardee,
and we would fall right asleep.

