

Archaeology

by Mary Akers

I would like to go back (with spade, pick, soft bristles), and sift through time and layers, brush away the intervening years, and find: the tooth, knocked out by my then best friend, when we were seven, careening downhill in my father's wheelbarrow on Boscobel Farm; the earring, lost on the moonlit grass of the Blue Ridge Parkway, the night of my first kiss and kiss and kiss; the fork, from the picnic, on the Colonial Parkway, on my lunch hour, in eighteenth century bodice, shift, and skirt, with the man I should have married, where days later, by phone, we discovered we both had chiggers; the wedding ring, lost in the sand of Hanauma Bay, where I snorkeled and the cold water took from my finger that which discord and infidelity would remove a year later; the bones and collar of my childhood friend, buried behind the shed, after being hit, just so, by a car against the head, so thoroughly unmarked that I couldn't let them bury her till morning, for the certainty that she was just sleeping; my father's dusty, creased, worn-down shoes, the only object of his lost life I saved, saved until the military husband who thought he knew me threw them out to spare me the trouble; the koala bear, Mr. Kowalski, of stuffed rabbit fur and leather fingers, whom I loved so dearly at age seven that my parents began to worry and so one morning, the day we were to leave for vacation, mysteriously, he was not beside my pillow, and never would be found; the plastic case of birth-control pills carefully researched, anticipated, and paid for by my first love, given as a present on my eighteenth birthday; the fetus of my stillborn child, carried within my body, lifeless for the last two months, born, but never seen, never buried, never properly mourned.

