

1987, What I wanted

by Robert Salley

In 1987, I wanted to play in the creek,
catching frogs and wishing the street lights would wait another
hour.

I wanted to keep a jar of lightning bugs by my bedside,
and name each one after cartoon characters.

In 1987, I wanted Tammy to be my friend,
I wanted to be important to somebody;
find a way to burst the soundless bubble that caged me
away from parents too young to see their recklessness.

In 1987, an Irish band sang With or Without you
and I wanted to know what love felt like.
I dreamed of beautiful girlfriends I would never make my wife,
because in 1987, I was too afraid to be kissed.

In 1987, I wanted to go to county fairs
instead of hospital waiting rooms.
I wanted to watch, for as long as I could,
until my innocence, like a balloon, disappeared from view.

I wanted to believe in a Heaven
where I would never say goodbye to anyone,
never again watch ailing flesh
turn cold and gray.

In 1987, I wanted her to beat cancer.
I wanted to know my grandmother
better than an 11 year old could.
In 1987, I wanted it to be 1986
again.

