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## What Home Was

Jen Hanks

*University of New Orleans*

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# What Home Was

Jennifer Hanks

*Andrea Saunders Gereighty / Academy of American Poets Award Runner Up*

Let's say my mom went out to buy milk one night  
in a slime-colored raincoat at eleven p.m.

Let's say I heard her leave over the video game  
where I'm 007, rapid firing at a dirty TV screen.

Let's say the store lights called to her  
the beasts in the meat packages like new children.

Let's say she thought she could start over  
a nursery cows growing back their limbs.

*Hide it* she thought *Under your rain slicker*

Let's say she didn't come home  
for three days and it was nice.

Dry cereal and weed for breakfast,  
my dogs snacking on sugary crumbs.

I'd walk to the beach and sink  
into the dirty sand.

The waves would kick up fish  
The waves would kick up fish

I'd find them still breathing  
half-dried their gills red as grapefruit

Cut in half so you could pour  
sugar on top.

*Where were you?* I ask her.

She hands me an empty milk carton  
smells like meat spoiling, like her clothes have absorbed  
worms of ground beef.

*Look* she says unzipping the rain slicker *What our home can be*