THE PROSE POEM:
AN INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL

Volume 1 | 1992

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Arlene Mandell

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Arlene L. Mandell

TURNING THE KEY

When I was 10, my friend Helene told me how babies were made. "The man sticks his thing in the women," she said.

I stopped jumping rope. "That's disgusting," I said, and ran upstairs to ask my mother if it was true.

"Well a man is like a key and a women is like a lock and the key fits into the lock." She didn't look at me when she told me this and became very busy making the meat loaf. After that I couldn't even look at my father for weeks.

When I was 31, married with two children, I realized something—the particular key I had selected fit into the lock, but it didn't turn anything! So I tried a few other keys and finally the door opened into a wondrous place filled with cascading waterfalls and electric blue fireworks.