THE PROSE POEM:
AN INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL

Volume 6 | 1997

Home Remedies

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HOME REMEDIES

I hated my sister while we were growing up. Many adults don't believe in childhood hate; they dismiss it as sibling rivalry. But I wasn't jealous of my sister. She was a cripple. Not a frail, sanitary cripple in a wheelchair—then I might have been jealous. Her right arm ended where her elbow should be and she had three baby fingers so perfectly knuckled and nailed you expected them to start growing any day. That's not why I hated her, though. I hated her because she was a spitter. She would hang over the banister and spit in my hair. She would spit in my food and then she would say she didn't do it.

My grandparents had a convertible sofa my sister and I had to share when we stayed with them at their lake house, but I would never sleep with her. That's how much I hated her. I would let my grandparents tuck us in and then I would get out and sleep on the floor, on the pillows my grandmother pulled off the sofa when it was time to make the bed. One night my grandfather found me there. He woke me up and walked me to the kitchen, where he made me swallow spoonfuls of honey, which I hated. "This will help," he said, trying to sweeten me from the inside out. He was always blaming my sister's mosquito bites on her sweet blood.

Or maybe that was a different time, when I woke myself up coughing and couldn't stop. I had pneumonia but that wasn't discovered until the end of the week, when my grandmother bent to kiss my forehead and found that I was burning up.