

ACADEMY GIRLS

We were friends
 who wore serge uniforms
 starched white collars
 oxfords and hose.
 We walked in silence
 from classroom to chapel
 single file
 orderly as notebooks
 tabbed for
 geometry
 poetry
 and Aquinas
 practicing etiquette
 on salmon croquettes
 at noon
 conjugating
 Latin verbs
 with smooth pink lips.

Behind glass doors
 on library shelves
 Teresa of Avila
 shouldered Byron
 and the Summa lay open
 on a sewing table
 in the next room.

We were
 a fortress
 guarded by angels.
 Their sharp tipped
 metal spears
 fenced the narrow oval
 of the garden
 where we walked
 to say the rosary
 in May
 with black-robed women
 who dressed their souls
 each day
 in gorgeous clothes
 only God could see.

They didn't know
 what romance lay
 in the way
 they smoothed their veils
 like long black hair
 when they knelt
 to pray.

All our teachers
 were not nuns.
 There was one
 whose perfume
 lingered in the hall.
 White Shoulders.
 Aphrodite
 wandering
 a cloister.

Senior year
 dancing through
 a sea of music
 in the gym
 every curl in place
 holding ourselves
 a bit stiffly
 inhaling
 Old Spice
 humming Blue Moon,
 across the room
 I saw you
 taking off your shoes
 thin shoulder straps
 slipping down your arm.
 A boy with Italian hair
 stuck the sandals
 in his pockets.

On the balcony
 watching you
 gray-eyed
 Sr. Catherine
 smiled
 remembering
 the nets she tore
 on her mad swim
 to God.

amo amas amat

We who spoke the language
 of nuns and angels
 wore our innocence
 like flowers
 smiling at each other
 across the dance floor
 dreamers
 believing life would keep
 all its promises.

My friend,
 Have you wakened
 in a green place?

Do you still dance barefoot?

--Mary Ann Michor Kopernich
 1028 10th St
 Manhattan Beach, CA
 90266