

# Home(less)

Abby Strain

—Poetry Contest

scattered the cat's remains across the yard. That day gave a whole new meaning to the phrase, "That's how the cookie crumbles."

My father and mother have since decided that we are dog people. Dog seem to have a much longer shelf life in our household, though I can tell my mother doesn't love our dogs in the same way that she loved our cats. I think the difference is that with dogs, there is no game in winning their affection. No matter how unacquainted you are with a dog, if you have food, the animal is at your feet grinning with a wagging tail.

As for me, I have grown indifferent to pets. After all, I don't know when their companionship will be ripped away. Much like most of my cats, my affection has been short lived. My aunt's cat Casino, though, is still trucking along in life. Every time I visit, I glare at it, letting it know how lucky it is. △

Silver station wagon bumps over craters,  
pulling into the same asphalt valley  
that has sheltered my dreams  
for seventeen days.

Lining the car doors: trash bags  
filled with belongings, sleeping sister  
with cramped legs.

Cracked black stone is my green-grass backyard.  
The back of my mother's seat  
is my living room hearth,  
and I curl beneath the flames.

This is the back of the mall parking lot  
where blue-clad security would  
rather patrol clearance-marked stores  
than walk across the heat waves  
emitted from my asphalt wasteland.

Worms wither and die away from their dirt  
after God sends his plagues of rain.  
God sends his plagues of angry landlords,  
and his children join his worms.

Your child-feet dangle out of the open door;  
you feel like taking the money  
from your friend's bookbag,  
like sleeping on the asphalt so your  
sister can stretch her legs. Like  
being no more than the parking lot.  
No more than home.

The cars who pass by whistle  
with pity, whistle with anger  
like the landlord when the  
money wasn't paid, like the principal  
after you punch that boy for  
laughing at your sister's greasy hair.  
Pity and anger are twins  
and no one has known a closeness like that.



## We Are Killing This Planet

Linda Arnoldus

Sculpture—paint, globe, plastic