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Allport Street

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ALLPORT STREET

Marie Kandl

Our baseball diamond
had a sewer cover
in the center of the street
as home plate.

Sometimes Fefe, the dwarf
who lived down the block
- we thought he was one of us
until we grew taller -
sometimes he was umpire,
crunched on the curb,
his arm around the lamppost.

Big Betty Kanka's breasts
leaned out like a front porch.
She carried cream puffs home from the bakery
in a little white box
tied with thin white string.

My mother baked rye bread and made noodles,
golden wheels drying on newspapers
spread across their double bed
on Sunday mornings as we went to Mass.

We hunted grasshoppers with rubber guns
in the bristly foxtail along the railroad tracks.

But mostly it was a desert
of sidewalk and street
without trees or lawns.

My oasis was up a flight
of well-scrubbed wooden stairs,
second floor, front
at 1642.