

This Is How I Remember It

By Betsy Kemper

Watching Joey pop the red berries into his mouth like Ju-Ju Bees and Mags only licking them at first, then chewing, so both of their smiles look bloody and I laugh though I don't eat even one...then suddenly our moms are all around us (although mine doesn't panic until she looks at the others and screams along with them things like *dammit did you eat these?* And shakes me so my "No" sounds like "oh-oh-oh" and then we're being yanked toward the house, me for once not resisting as my mother scoops me up into her arms, and inside the moms shove medicine, thick and purple, down our throats in the bathroom; Joey in the toilet, Mags in the sink, me staring at the hair in the tub drain as my mom pushed my head down and there is red vomit everywhere, splashing on the mirror and powder-blue rugs, everywhere except the tub where mine is coming out yellow, the color of corn muffins from lunch, not a speck of red, *I told you*, I want to scream and then it is over and I turn to my mother for a touch or a stroke on the head like the other moms (but she has moved to the doorway and lights a cigarette, pushed her hair out of her eyes) and there is only her smeared lips saying, *This will teach you anyway.*