

James Hearst Poetry Prize

First Place

KIRSTEN ABEL

Geneva Avenue

The front door was always open. The dog always slept half in, half out.
Afternoons, I'd watch the neighbor girl smoke her father's cigarettes

out on the front porch. *He's cool with it, she'd say. He's cool with
pretty much anything.* I'd turn down a drag. I'd use my shoe to nudge

a lemon dropped from a nearby tree. Nights, I was in charge.
I'd make my brothers bologna sandwiches, one with syrup and two without.

Sometimes we'd sit on the side steps and listen to the summer rains.
One night, the neighbor girl's father threw a party.

I could see my father's face from the kitchen window, bright with beer
and torchlight and the telling of some wild story. I was washing the dishes.

My brothers were in the other room watching *Ace Ventura: Pet Detective*.
I slotted a plate into the drying rack. I looked across the yard

littered with skateboards and lemon trees. It was a clear night. I was thirteen
and alone. That's all. Nothing bad happened. When people ask me

why I don't visit anymore or call, why I can't forgive, I say
there's nothing to say. There's nothing to forgive. I finished the dishes

and went into the other room. I wasn't hungry and I'd already seen
the movie anyways, twice, so instead I watched my brothers eat.