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Origami Poems Project

Learning

by Jan Keough © 2010

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Jan Keough

They pile on the common room couch
waiting for *The Brady Bunch*
every day at 5 pm
before the cafeteria opens for dinner.

Many wear their fuzzy slippers
and take turns braiding hair.
No one does homework
but bring their books anyway.

And they're singing with the TV
as you walk in the room.
We know the song by heart,
they scream at you.

Their laughter is big and shows
they know every note,
every family truth
the song tells them.

As the show begins
they stare hard,
Loving the big, grimy tube
with the vase of plastic flowers on top.

At commercials they talk and talk,
jump on each other's words
about Greg, Bobby, Marcia, Cindy
how they're like a real family.

They're better than mine!
one girls shouts at the ceiling tiles.

I'm gonna have a big family – only boys.
a promise bounces from the couch.

I don't want to have kids...
says a girl on the floor,
some seem to agree.

Her teachers understand
why she seldom talks.
And why she walks like anger
into every class.

But grades don't matter
at this kind of school,
the Headmistress explained
when he called.

It'll take about a month
before she starts to fit in
with the rest
of the abandoned girls.

Dropped Off at Boarding School

Daddy and his newest girlfriend
drop her off.
It's Sunday and the girls
left for the weekend
wear pajamas most of the day.

She wears grown-up clothes
her décolletage
looking fine
in the new sweater,
Daddy tells her.

He leaves her with the Dean
and 3 big suitcases.
Enough for the season, baby.
We'll call you at Christmas.
Switzerland and slopes and the girlfriend.

the AA speaker comes to class

she almost raises her hand.

instead
she stares
until the speaker looks away –
he doesn't need syllables
to translate her eyes.

he thinks about
what he just said -
his story, his misery,
his sobriety,
his recovery,
his family's orbital decay.

he asks the silent students
for comments, questions?

does she want to say something?

I want to leave.
- why?
right now.
- but why?
I live this.
I don't need to hear about it
anymore.

he looks away.
he knows
she's walking
out the door.