## THE JEWELS OF STORYTELLERS

The gang was waiting for me in our sagging gazebo all the section-eight storytellers their tongues lubricated with the oil of gladness

How vulnerable they are how loving their very faults are rough jewels little white lies big bravado rubies

Pearls of great price in every telling heaped around me so greedy— I gather up all of them and carry them home

## PATTERN OF MEN

His parents can't really afford to show off their credit card travels but they make two trips a year My grand-nephew Brent rushed in here after Easter his skinny kid chest lost in a wild jungle of color

Look here, Auntie
I bought this mola in
the San Blas Islands
Cool, ain't it
which gave me a headache
Is this the way they teach English
at Robert Louis Stevenson
Private School

in a grove of trees along Carmel Seven Mile Drive his daddy squeezes out nice money to send him there Why do I remember his grandfather hoed cotton to buy the type of shirt Rudolph Valentino wore

—Wilma Elizabeth McDaniel Tulare, CA

## THE MUSTY FAMILIAR

Ten days after their breakup, she takes an armful of things that remind her too much of him to the local thrift store. As she enters the building, the smell of sweat, mothballs, and old age reminds her that she, too, is now a discard. She hates that smell. His whole house smelled like that; they had gone to several thrift stores before she made the connection. Trying to ignore the tightness in her throat, she goes to the back of the store to the glassware, where she finds two more juice glasses she's been collecting and a lid for an orphaned casserole dish. On her way to the checkout, a pin-striped vest, exactly what she's wanted for months, catches her eye; the vest is a perfect color and fit. She puts her money on the counter and inhales deeply. Not once. Several times. And she leaves with more than she brought in.

> —Sandra Spencer Denton, TX