

*Laura Jensen*

## Snapshots of Brownies

### *Brownies with Crackerjacks*

When he was young he had a darkroom  
The pastor told me once. Once a branch occurred  
To me, foreign but insistent. I gave and gave  
Until I despised it. The green steps are gray  
And the yellow forsythia is gray, the brownies  
Are gray in a row on our back porch.

All in a forest of stained glass and ochre  
The Lutheran pastor at the lectern  
Speaks of a tape of values across your forehead.  
I shift from foot to foot.  
"The property of a color by which  
it is distinguished as light or dark."

How can we keep the shots from getting cheap?  
None of them look right at the same time,  
All of them are eating crackerjacks,  
Three are in my high school annual,  
And two are in the reunion book.

### *Brownies with Wisteria*

None of us look right at the same time.  
One is in photos they always sent  
At Christmas, the four blond daughters  
The luminous French braids.

Two rows in front of the gray wisteria  
The gray trellis along the side of the porch.

The pledge in macaroni, artificial flowers,  
Terra cotta pot made into a bell —  
I cannot remember, we were just so silly  
With our crackerjacks, what craft we learned  
At our house. Maybe it depended  
On what mood we were in after school.

The artificial flowers made in a basement  
During a thunderstorm, a long white  
Fork blasts to earth in the dark. My mother  
Who is driving says, "That one struck something."  
Pieces of violet strewn over the table everywhere.

### *Brownies in Costumes*

I stand in my large gray coat. The pastor  
Speaks briefly in the cemetery and walks off.  
We looked into the camera, negative after  
Negative, my sister, myself, cousins,  
Parties in a row. "That property  
Of a color by which it is distinguished

As light or dark." We look out from the page,  
The same although we are older, older.  
How can we keep the shots from getting cheap?  
No husband, no son, no credits from Lutheran colleges,  
The church is for no woman like me.

Now we all look right at the same time,  
Since only one of us does not have on a mask.  
Myself — the large gypsy with rouge and black yarn  
Hair. Some just have on masks. One is a hobo.  
One is a duck. In the annual. In the reunion book.