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Stonegate Suburb, 1989–90

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JOE PLICKA

stonegate suburb,
1989–90

F
Soccer, bleeding right through the
Park, the gym, the next state over.
Fog. A solitary crow cries
from somewhere for wet-bottomed
boys to stretch their groins—boys wrapped
in the sour smell of old grass
and shin-guards. A whistle blows, the
crowd hisses and pops, the coaches
collect pizza money. Us bench-
warmers play with our backs to the
game.

W
Sometime during Christmas break Dad
organizes a dump trip. Who can
forget that silent stench, the warm
vapor of junk wrapped in dirt
decaying? Seagulls dropping out
of the cold pearl sky—I look for
something to throw, to maim with—circling
like fat, freakish flies of winter
they goggle our trash stash. I sweep
out the bed and clank the tailgate
shut.

Sp

A redolent tang. Everything
is nothing in the suburbs.
Flowers materialize, dust
disappears, trundling vans speed in
and out of the cul-de-sac, carrying
the heavy fruits of labor. The
kitchen window is open at noon
now sometimes, wind tickling the
shutters, bringing faded highway
songs—breathing musky colors in our
face.

S

It is the Fourth of July, the
picnic at the club consists of
little kids getting drubbed by big
ones, playing dock tag in the brown water
touching toes with perch, blue gill, catfish,
eyes closed, wet hands crusted with duck
crap. Then the little Porza twins run
to the edge, flip down the front of
their Speedos, and pee on the biggest
kid's head. And that just makes everyone
smile.