



1986

Only

Laura Shelley

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Recommended Citation

Shelley, Laura (1986) "Only," *Inscape*: Vol. 6: No. 1, Article 6.

Available at: <https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/inscape/vol6/iss1/6>

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Only

You offer me a ride in your blue Subaru,
And we stop at a Chinese cafe
Filled with smoke.

We sit and talk until the waitress stands
With her pad and pencil waiting for our order;
Then, we search the menu.

We hardly notice the food when it comes,
But we carry it to our mouths, automatically,
Like popcorn at the movie.

Then you stop and give me a silent look,
And my story spills out of its two-month confinement
With trickling tears.

The waitress takes our half-filled plates
And leaves us to each other
And my past.

She comes again with a pitcher of water
And fills the empty glasses we intently turn
With our fingers.

Pulling on our coats, we search
Our purses, and when we pay,
You buy me mints.

Laurel Shelley