

The Club of Imaginary Friends

Bryana Joy

When we were children we knew very
few people who spoke our language.

When guests came over I sat up as late
as they would let me, straining to make sense
of politics and theology, always stuck
on terms like *cinsel* and *piç*,
mystery words I knew
I wasn't allowed to understand.
For years my sister,
who was only eighteen
months old when
her world switched tongues,
tuned out everything but English.
 We had each other

and thirty-five square feet of smooth concrete
that was just in view of the apartment window
from which Mom could see us and from which
all distances were measured.
We had two little bikes with red and blue tires that
became noble steeds with names
and temperaments of their own.
And we had all the people we'd ever met
to keep us company.

 Oh cousins who we visited once every two and a
half years and were slightly scared of even though
we all wanted to like each other

 Oh friends of the children of our parents' friends
who we saw only once at a birthday party and
didn't have the courage to speak to
 we had you.

If we met you one time in America
and you made even an indifferent impression on us,
you can be sure you were a member of our
Club of Imaginary Friends.

You accompanied us on a hundred high jinks,
pounded bareback over prairies peppered
with covered wagons, purple bonnets, buffalo.
You fought crime on three or four continents,
solved cases that would have baffled
Encyclopedia Brown, boy detective.
You have lived a whole life you don't even
know about.

Bryana Joy is a writer, poet, and painter who works full-time sending illustrated snail mail letters all over the world. She spent her childhood in Turkey and is currently in the middle of a one-year sojourn in York, England with her husband. Her poetry has appeared or is forthcoming in an assortment of literary magazines, including *The Ekprastic Review*, *Ruminate*, and *The Sunlight Press*. She has a thing for thunderstorms, loose-leaf tea, green countrysides, and the music of Johann Sebastian Bach.