

Back Seat

--Lynn Alexander

It's where a lot of fights got started
with my brother and sister, especially
on long trips to those happy isles,
envisioned by my parents as the four-day
remedy to their everyday woe.
Being the oldest, I'd try to break it up
before the long arm of my father
reached back to swat our legs,
and mother yelled the predictable death threats
with descriptions, not of tropical beaches
but of orphanages, where children have to fight
for their food and no one loves them.
That was where I saw how unfair justice can be,
that punishment falls equally on the guilty
and the innocent, if efforts to keep the peace
fail, if the fighting doesn't stop.