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Untitled

S. Starr

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Kingsville, 1970

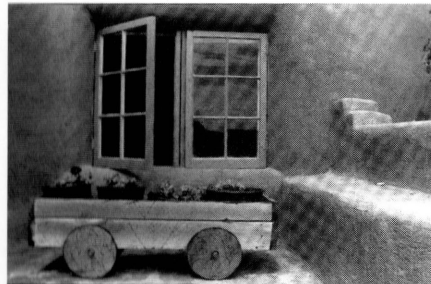
George Henson

*Éramos niños y nada más.*¹

We ran down narrow *caliche*² streets,
where passing Coca-Cola trucks raised clouds of dust,
leaving in their wake *gritos y toses*³
and stinging eyes, and bead necklaces
around tiny sweat-soaked necks,
necklaces that would disappear
in every bathtub in the *barrio*⁴ by 10 p.m.
(That's 9 on school nights.)

Beneath flickering street lights and dancing fireflies
we played *al escondite*⁵,
hiding behind *el vecino*'s⁶ Rambler bought new in 1965,
*correteando*⁷ between cookie-cutter houses
and old beat-up garbage cans,
stopping only long enough to buy *raspados*⁸
at don Cenaide's *chiringuito*⁹
on the corner of *la calle Ella*¹⁰,
sometimes raspberry, *y a veces de fresa*¹¹.

And while *los viejos*¹² played dominos
and smoked cigars on front porches,
*las abuelas*¹³ swept the caliche dust
that floated in through open windows
from once-red linoleum floors,
now faded from daily moppings
with no *sé cuántos*¹⁴ gallons of Clorox.
It's funny how bleach erases everything but memories.



¹We were children and nothing more.

²salt peter: used, instead of asphalt, as a road filler in barrio neighborhoods

³shouts and coughs

⁴neighborhood

⁵hide-and-seek

⁶the neighbor's

⁷running around

⁸snow cones

⁹stand

¹⁰Elle Street

¹¹and sometimes strawberry

¹²the old men

¹³the grandmothers

¹⁴I don't know how many