

# Red Rock Review



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Issue Eleven

Willis Barnstone • Deborah Byrne • Ryan G. Van Cleave  
David Benioff • Nami Mun • William G. Fraser  
and others

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Melisa Cahnmann**Make Believe**

I walk Center City in sandals though  
 glass sticks to heels  
 and toes go raw with humid  
 city travel. The cars double-parked  
 and bus driver's hand to angry  
 horn because it's hard enough,  
 isn't it?

That is what we say in moments of clarity  
 in the hot kitchen when you  
 ask for our favorite knife, mine,  
 the one with serrated edge. Later  
 I sit with a stack of books and write my  
 name fast on first pages  
 of ones I owned before you, the first  
 furtive act I've thought of since  
 we pulled each other to grass, sky  
 and branches beneath us.

So soon it seems we're startled out of dreams.  
 I remember my first  
 adult night in California  
 when the earth shook harder  
 than any washer and dryer known  
 in basements of childhood.  
 I grew nauseous from the thought  
 that ground could betray me.

I was raised in the book  
 of laws where the Talmud  
 asks: who  
 is at fault if you fall  
 on a sidewalk of glass?  
 The one who owns the home  
 did not break the window, dutifully  
 pulls weeds and takes trash cans  
 in and out every week. How can  
 we blame each other?  
 And how can we not?

I want to be strong like the black tree  
 split from lightning and the beautiful girl,  
 four maybe or five who  
 makes believe a fort and I wonder:  
 have we lost the ability to pretend? Her  
 mother who always imagined a husband

sleeps next to her daughter: can she be  
content to get half of what she wanted?  
A tree house only goes  
so far, the afternoon we walk through  
clumps of poison oak or that evening  
when your back turns, just close enough to my lips  
to hope it will last forever.

My ground. Please  
stop shaking. Or is that tears?  
Mine. Yours. A make-believe place  
where we fall  
in and  
out.