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## Six Degrees of Separation

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## Six Degrees of Separation

Angela Sorby

Alice B. Toklas was alive in 1966,  
but my parents (being themselves) were absorbed  
in buying diapers, paying rent, blowing up  
the blow-up pool—  
so it didn't dawn on them that if  
they dropped everything  
(golf clubs, keys, oven mitt)  
and flew Pan Am to Paris,  
and rented a Mini,

they could find Alice B. at her flat in France,  
resplendent in a black wool dress,  
marinating half a lamb,  
and they could set me on her lap.  
Most laps are chairs: dull and sturdy,  
but hers would be itchy and dense  
like a college lecture  
in twentieth-century history.  
and her hands would be cold,  
betraying a lingering

nostalgia for the Vichy puppet state.  
But we missed our chance. Alice is dead,  
and so is Freud., so there's no one to say  
that my parents (*mother especially*) are to blame.  
Every life is its own flame.

And now, in the summer of 2003,  
George Bush is peddling a "road map to peace,"  
and Eminem is touring, and the world teems  
with historical figures that my son will never meet.  
Just today, Gregory Peck died. And where were we?  
We were sitting on a tilted picnic bench  
in Milwaukee.

Son I'm sorry.  
The sex-ed books call birth a miracle,  
but what they don't describe is me lying helpless  
and bloody as you were born.  
I could only carry you so far.  
My muscles pressed *eject* and then  
My cry was not your cry,  
while outside, who can say what wild  
cargo passed us by?