

1992

# A Garden of Pathos

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## Recommended Citation

Remington, Rebekah. "A Garden of Pathos." *The Iowa Review* 22.3 (1992): 180-181. Web.  
Available at: <https://doi.org/10.17077/0021-065X.4209>

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## A Garden of Pathos · *Rebekah Remington*

Where cats and tomatoes once flickered  
a man with cancer of the larynx mows the lawn  
for five bucks. The clothespoles are still there,  
double T's, now that the line is gone,  
and the sparrows' sleep, and dancer  
linens. I can't remember the words  
I invented then, but a chain  
of them goes on now like my teen-age body years ago  
in the face-to-face mirrors of a dressing room:  
trouble, Tod, and tough luck . . . time  
itself is not so awful. I try to remember  
this. I try to remember childhood  
has its own tragedies. The plywood tea house  
scattered in the mud after a late summer  
storm, our mud-spattered dolls, their blank  
and gelid eyes, so stunned it could happen.  
That we would let it happen. Or the sad  
procession after the cat died.  
Even the crones bowed. Lonnie, my twin glance  
and tag-a-long, carried her loss  
in the clouded words "complications of childbirth."  
One night, a new neighbor found her lying back  
between two garbage bins in the alley,  
her sly and vagrant eyes camouflaged among Orion  
and street-lit shards of beer bottles,  
her whiskeyed breath all that was left of dew.  
She'd hardly know me now.  
"She's ok, got a job at the subshop, and boys,"  
the neighbor tells me. "And what can you expect,  
her granny with Alzheimer's?" I drag  
the cement birdbath to the truck, parting  
the grass in a last wake. He says he's sorry  
he never knew my mother. We talk about blue-

collar sell outs and cryptic government loans,  
as the mower sprays a confetti of fresh cut.  
Farther up the street, a girl rakes a title  
from the billboard of the Boulevard cinema, letter by letter.