

**back when the world was within walking  
distance,**

*Ruthie Barakat*

i spent summer days floating,  
hidden in the neighbor's in-ground pool,  
where i paddled with no noodle,  
my digits prune-y with chlorine.

dirt angels formed beside a baseball dugout,  
splayed arms and legs moved in unison,  
blue skies above the neighborhood.  
my nails bitten and full of earth.

the library was five minutes by bike.  
sometimes i dozed in the periodical room  
among air-conditioned bookshelves  
or flipped through pages with chapped thumbs

on command i was a: dolphin, pink power ranger,  
silent wallflower with a soccer ball  
pacing around the backyard.  
with tiny fists unafraid to meet rusted wire fence.

must have gone through thousands of boxes  
of blueberry toaster strudel. i'd go out,  
with sticky hands, to knock on houses.  
and i'd wave with my innocent frosting fingers.