

LITTLE WING

(POETRY)

by ruth nelson

For my mother on her birthday

September 1968

homecoming banners still drape
from the high school bleachers as they cruise past.
Avocado seats pulse from the radio
and the tail pipe keeps the beat
in her brother's used Camaro.
Three friends, 72 miles to see Jimi,
live.

September 1988

I lay my head on her lap and dream
of my twiggy legs grown into broad tree-thighs like hers.
Later, I look in her bedroom mirror,
push my fists against the back of my thighs,
spreading the flesh outward in satisfaction.

Over carob chip cookies she tells me
how thin she was in 1968.
She survived on Fresca
and her kidneys will never be the same.
She wore a size 2 polka dot skirt to see Jimi,
live.

September 2010

Traveling through a cobwebbed recording
to the night she saw him,
I close my eyes
and stand next to a '60s version of her:
black hair cut in an a-line bob,
plastic-rimmed glasses
bigger than her smile.
She is runway thin,
thinner than her photographs
and somehow I miss the thickness of her,
the padded frame and soft give of her.

I turn up the stereo and imagine
the weight of a generation
welded into one instrument
as Jimi plays *Little Wing*,
live.