

SAN MATEO COUNTY POET LAUREATE



Poetry Reading *by*

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About this poem:

In Sitka, Alaska, there is a street that runs parallel to Katlian, in a part of town called ***the village***, where the two fish processing plants are located along the water. Back Street (also called Kogwantan Street) is lined with small houses and gardens, and affords a view of the bridge over Sitka Sound to the west towards Mount Edgecumbe and the Gulf of Alaska. I wanted to evoke the sights and sounds of Back Street, and create the feeling of both connection and longing that exist side by side for me when I think of home.

BACK STREET

bush poppy, tower of jewels,
hatchling in the leaves, in
the old shed, my shears and blades,
your cedar canoe, how quickly
you walked up the hill, your mother's
stovetop and sourdough, beads
in hanks, the greenish glass, your children
at the tideline building castles
for the crabs, purple shore, afterlight,
dogrose blinking pink along the highway,
fish skin, hook song, halibut eye, silver
scales coating our arms,
silver sky drawn tight over the village,
man with dog, man with hair to his waist,
the ocean hunched along the street
tipping and spilling, my cedar root
basket, painted house and the air filled with salt,
crab pots and rope, the sidewalk moss
and the new cedar handmade casket, your
plastic rose, goat hair and leather,
I miss you, I've seen your face amongst the
grasses at the back of the house, thimble-
berry and wild carrot, blue painted pottery
shard I glue to a metal pin and wear against my heart