

# Narrative

Janine Joseph

J gave me my first mop because she loved that I loved cleaning the kitchen instead of pouring cereal over Saturday morning cartoons. J never felt the same, and would lisp hours of *Rascals* and *Smurfs*, then *Superfriends*, *Snorks*. But when J came to get us, after we got the car and horse-property house, J and J never had the time—too many chores with that yard and

all those fruit trees. J was wrong; I loved setting the table after mass with eggs and soy sauce the most, though I can't remember much of it, except that J, J, and J were always there—and I never got to see them anymore. J's permed hair was growing out and she and J started smoking without me. J was kicked out. J had even kissed a girl at the public school, and we knew what that meant. After he told

the neighbor girl he loved her skull when he meant her soul, we thought it was over for him and me, and J and J. J hung paper lanterns at Christmas.

J still lined shoes at the door. J still stocked burlap sacks of Calrose rice and bulk-boiled, still served and grubbed on pork with their hands. We were so new to the block. So when J laughed and made fun of J and the girl and how stuttering stupid he must've sounded, J scolded us. We shouldn't talk about those things

or people who do those things, J said, and J listened.