

TOLEDO, OHIO

Toledo, Ohio.
Rock music blasting:
Sublime, Rush, Nirvana.
Driving through town in Papa's Suburban.

Gray faces and
grayer places:
A city drained of color.
A town bleak and dreary.

Snowdrifts piling
over my young head.
A perfect day for sledding
on a dull green trashcan lid.
Warm mittens and earmuffs
my mama forces me to wear.

Dirty needles and shattered glass
mixed among the gravel of my playground:
I see it
but don't see it.

Mama's crying
and Papa's yelling.
The lights go off
and it's so cold.

Smoky incense
burns my eyes:
The sweet smell of jasmine
lifts me to my grandmother's
warm embrace.

Everything will be OK.
I am a survivor.

– *Natasha T.*