

## SUBURBAN ENCOUNTER ●

Lisa Low

With what my kids want for supper in mind,  
I swing into a grocery store parking lot  
and almost hit a baby. I slam on the brakes  
and hum, stunned. One inch more and I might  
have hit that baby, I think, splashing it, thin  
as buttermilk and broken eggs, across  
the pitted asphalt. “Excuse me, sir,” I  
cry to a boy packing groceries into the  
back of his truck. “I almost hit your baby!”  
A woman in a long skirt follows, flying  
straight as an arrow in my direction.  
“Then you should learn to drive, BITCH!”  
At that the baby screams and the mother  
rips it from its carriage. “You touch my kid  
and I’ll murder your ass!” The baby  
screams again and she smacks it, stuffing  
it into her husband’s arms. I cut the  
engine and slide off snakelike, ease into  
a faraway spot; go the long way around  
to avoid them. At the grocery store  
entrance an old woman holds the door  
for me, bowing her head low to allow  
the kindness to occur. I confess I like  
the nice world better. It’s the one I’m  
used to. Regarding that other world, where  
the streets are mean and life is short; where  
even a baby hasn’t got a chance in hell,  
conscious of my good fortune in avoiding it  
(shamefaced; SHAMEFACED!), I want no part.