

Passage of Time  
*for the graduating class of 2007*

You help each other straighten gold-threaded tassels  
and fasten mortarboards into curls and fades with bobby pins.  
Blue nylon robes swish softly with movement, whispering futures  
of dorm rooms and lecture halls.

I watch you now  
as I have watched you through the seasons  
of the years  
and your lives.

In my mind you are freshmen again, and I am standing once more  
before your sullen faces and mistrustful eyes  
with a dry mouth and photocopied course descriptions.  
I remember the way you shifted in your seats, so many stories I did not know,  
so much of your world hidden from me  
behind slang and sly smiles and notes passed across desktops.

Slowly, doors opened between us.  
I remember the elf-like helium laughs as you filled balloons  
and your own lungs  
before the first dance,  
the air heavy with anticipation of strobe lights and pulsing music.  
We gathered after school in the early winter twilight  
and shaped reindeer from pipe cleaners and plastic eyes,  
burning the memory into our skin with hot glue fingers.  
I remember the brightly-colored candy canes lining the tables like silent sentries  
witnessing the passage of time,  
each holiday fading into the next.

When I close my eyes, I feel the flat-top griddle's heat radiating up against my skin  
at the first Carnival,  
the one where it didn't rain.  
You spun cotton candy into pink-sugar clouds  
and drizzled the sweetness of syrup onto Sno-cones.  
Across the hot basketball court, Ping pong balls pop across tabletops.  
Tiny orange goldfish swim dizzily inside my cooler  
after the frantic ride back from the pet store,  
water sloshing over leather car seats.  
The sun sets over laughter and the echoed strains of dance music.

Now, you stand taller, straighter, grown into your bodies and minds.  
You smooth the edges of your graduation robes, fix makeup and hair,  
flash white teeth for photographs. Stories tumble between you in the frantic minutes  
before the processional, the tears, the handshakes and diplomas.  
In your hands and faces I see the children you once were.  
In your eyes I see the adults you are becoming.  
Here between the two, I hold my breath against the future  
that shimmers on the edge of this moment.

Music strains float up from the ceremony below  
and you shift into nervous lines.  
As you pass forward into the next stage of the morning  
of school  
of life  
The breath whispers out between my lips  
and I watch you go.

*-Leah Makuch*