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SOUVANKHAM THAMMAVONGSA

GAYATRI

I have a picture of us when we are seven
but we aren’t in it. At the time it was taken
we thought we were. We posed with our wide
grins and best-friends-forever certainty. I angled
the camera to capture us in front of a Christmas tree.
All the sparkling tinsel and dangling silver balls aren’t there.
There is only the ceiling and the tip
of the pine needle. There isn’t a star or an angel
on top. I have kept this picture of us for years,
the only one to remember and laugh at what happened
to us then. It was taken before a time when you could
see a picture on a screen, see how it turned out
and decide whether it was worth keeping. I think of you
now and again, the plain peanut butter sandwiches we ate
with apples. You said you were going to be a dentist
when you grew up, and with a fork and a spoon
you determined it was possible I would live
and sent me home with a bag full of Twizzlers and hair bands.