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## Down Queen Anne Hill

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## Down Queen Anne Hill

My roommate wears holey ragg socks  
as she pads to the bathroom.  
Behind closed doors I hear laughter  
and know she wages  
a silent battle.

I nod as we stand with cold feet  
on white tile,  
She doesn't know, she does not think  
to care of what others say.  
But I hear words that clash  
against smiles.

I spit toothpaste into the sink.  
It tastes like bubblegum -- the flavored kind  
kids are supposed to like.  
The toothpaste coats the white porcelain,  
then slithers with water down the drain.  
I think how I hated the taste and wonder  
if that means I am an adult.

My cousins were seven and ten.  
They used Crest mint flavor.  
Their mom probably didn't want them  
to like bubblegum flavored toothpaste.

Bus route number four took us downtown  
I sat between my cousins on the bus.  
They liked to pull the string  
to signal the next stop.

Across the aisle sat a drunk woman.  
She swayed with the rhythm of the bus  
down Queen Anne Hill.  
Words bounced from her lips  
and she spoke to the driver through the mirror.  
He was old and he was black.  
She reminded him of his color.

My cousins and I watched her and sat close.  
They leaned in when they spoke so  
the woman couldn't hear.  
I could smell the mint on their breath.

She pulled the string  
and stumbled off the steps  
with a backwards wave at the driver.  
My cousins covered their mouths with tiny hands  
but I saw their faces fold in a smile.  
On the sidewalk the woman laughed.

I rinse the sink  
and can see my roommates feet next to mine.  
The woman cackles and I wonder  
if the bus driver wore holey socks.

*Julie Gruen*