

Quarter Moon  
Quarterly Mar '96

# new moon



## I Knew There Was An Animal Under The Trees

by Lois J. Peterson

*I knew  
there was an animal  
under the trees.*

*We were driving home in the dark  
in the dark car  
my mother humming  
my father's gaze straight  
along the unlit road  
his chin green  
in the dashboard light.*

*I saw  
the animal under the trees  
I saw  
the rope that held it there  
I saw it  
dip its head  
seeing  
not seeing me.*

*I blinked, sat back  
and settled my eyes  
against my mother's back  
and hummed along with her.*

*Years later  
I told them  
about the animal  
under the trees.*

*"Yes" said my father  
"Yes, I remember" said my mother  
It was a gazelle.*

*They knew who had tied it there  
in whose garden it stood  
their names  
where they moved to  
later.*

*I did not ask  
about the animal under the trees  
when it was freed  
why it was there.*

*I did not ask  
if they had seen it  
that night  
in the dark.*

*I remember the animal  
blinking  
I imagine the soft sweep of its lashes  
against my cheek  
like tears.*

*I knew there was an animal  
under the trees  
seeing  
not seeing me.*

