

# Palm Ridge

When Alaska was  
Robert Serviced out of me  
I flew south  
to saguaro, to mesquite, to ironwood,  
to man-made lakes and crumbling  
granite trails.

Friends in the hot tub by the key-shaped pool  
call this place God's waiting room.  
I call it what it is, the Valley of the Sun,  
and climb from the tub.

I walk past Humpty Dumpties  
gossiping on a shelf inside the pool.  
Pause by my husband in his shaded lawn chair  
long enough to marinate my shoulders in sunscreen.  
He fingers a brown spot on his forearm.  
"Here's a new one," he says.  
"I'm like the bottom of a ship, barnacled."

Everyone practices humor here.  
My pharmacist asks if I played golf with Lincoln.  
My physician labels me EKG Champion of Stress Tests.

I double-step down the wide steps and cast off.  
Swim a pool length, jackknife and stretch out.  
Hook my feet on the concrete edge  
beneath the gushing artificial waterfall.

My body is parchment,  
an antiquated palimpsest, partially erased by jests.  
But in this warm light my veins syncopate the blues

—Norma S. Bowkett

This poem tied for second place in the BYU Studies 1999 poetry contest.