Waiting for the Popsicle Man  
[Reflections on Incest]

This poem is dedicated to the many, many girls and women over the millennia who have survived.

The day she died
my sister told me
"Beware of the popsicle man,
he'll get you when you're older!"

Then she killed herself.

I was four
my sister nine.

After that I would not eat popsicles.
I hid when I heard the popsicle truck coming
the bell ringing.

Afraid
the popsicle man would find me,
killed me,
like he had my sister.

For years I hid
hoping to avoid the fate
my sister foretold.

Then
I turned seven.
That summer Uncle Joe came to visit,
like he had every summer
every holiday.

But this summer was different,
my brother Mike had gone to camp.
He was lucky.
He was a boy.

My parents said girls should not go to camp.
It wasn't safe.
So I was to spend the summer
with Sue-Sue and Raggedy Anne.

Uncle Joe felt sorry for me alone, with my babies
so he let me go with him when he went into town.

And on the long ride
he would tell me stories,
fantastic stories.
I liked Uncle Joe, then.

He would sometimes buy me a lollipop
sometimes an ice cream cone
I liked Uncle Joe, then.

Sometimes on the way back
we would stop to see the ducks
on Mr Mosey's pond
and sometimes the horses in Fender's Field.
I liked Uncle Joe, then.

One day Uncle Joe said
"You're getting to be a big girl Angie,
I think it's time I got you a popsicle"  
"But I don't like popsicles I said
"All big girls like popsicles" said Uncle Joe
He bought me an ice cream that day.
I liked Uncle Joe, then.

After that
Uncle Joe always wanted to buy popsicles.
"I don't like popsicles"
I would tell him
and every time he would say
all big girls liked popsicles.
I did not like Uncle Joe so much, then.

One day
after Uncle Joe bought me an ice cream,
be bought a popsicle.

On the way back
we stopped at Fender's Field
As the car stopped
Uncle Joe's melting popsicle dropped.
It fell on his lap.
He told me to eat the popsicle.
"I don't like popsicles" I told him. He forced me to eat the popsicle sitting on his lap. I did not like Uncle Joe, then.

The next time we went to town Uncle Joe bought a popsicle. I wanted to walk back but it was too far. Uncle Joe wouldn't let me. Again we stopped at Fender's Field. I did not like Uncle Joe, then.

Uncle Joe warned me that if I told my mother about the popsicles the popsicle man would get me like he got Janie.

The popsicle man. I hate you Uncle Joe. You are the popsicle man.

Every year, every summer, every Christmas, the popsicle man came to take me to Fender's Field.

Every year I asked my parents to let me go to camp, and every year my parents said it wasn't safe for girls to go to camp.

I hated my parents, then. I hated Uncle Joe, then. I hated myself, then.

I hoped the popsicle man would kill me as he killed Janie. But that popsicle man never came.

I haven't eaten a popsicle in fifteen years nor seen Uncle Joe nor visited my parents. But I still wait for the other popsicle man.

Ann Phillips is a Caribbean-Canadian feminist and activist, working in the area of race, class, gender and women's reproductive options, who is surviving.

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