

H. A. DAVIDSON

Cartwheel

Mrs. Russell's third grade classroom
(which is now the senior high's biology lab)
was where we met.
Me, the overachieving social outcast,
You, the new kid at school.
What a perfect pair.
Noon hour was filled with making snow forts,
Or biking through mud puddles or catching
frogs.
And who cared that you were a boy
And I was a girl
And that we were supposed to hate each
other?
You were my best friend.
But secretly I had wild fantasies about marry-
ing you
(even though I wasn't sure what happens
after the ceremony).
And somewhere between all the snow and
mud and frogs
I wondered if you felt something too.
I think you did.
Why were we so eager to grow up?
What do eight-year old know about love?
And then it was high school
And the realization that we are no longer
children—
We are young adults.
Which is the difference between
The playground and indoor sports intramu-
ral,
The jump from picture books to novels,
An octave or so in vocal range for you
And the switch from a training bra
To a "I'm-a-full-fledged-young-woman" 28A
bra for me.
But you were still you
Even if everything else decided to change:
Writing notes and skipping class,
Walking home together
(even though you lived in the opposite
direction).
Slow dancing and skinny-dipping.
I was your best girl, you told everyone.
And even though you took someone else
To the junior prom,
(which I didn't go to, but eventually got over)

I was secretly in love with you.
But what do sixteen-year-olds know about
love?
And then you went to McGill
(because that's the best place
if you're going to become a lawyer).
And I stayed here and went to Acadia
(because they had everything
I needed to become a teacher).
And then we were pen-pals,
And it was a letter every week,
About your roommate, who snored,
and your small dorm room
(without a window, as I recall).
About dining hall food and
Not enough bathrooms per floor.
And I reminded you how less complicated
Things were when you planned to become
an astronaut
And I was going to be a ballerina.
And you'd write how homesick you were,
How much you missed me
And that you were coming home soon...
But you never did.
And I pretended not to notice,
After all, what do twenty-year-olds know
about love?
And now it's the *real* world.
We've got our marriages and mortgages,
Careers and children.
Perhaps, someday, I will be your children's
teacher,
Or you will sue someone for me.
Dear friend, how long has it been
Since I saw you last?
What do we adults know about life?
Except that we should
Cartwheel back in time
To when we were eight-years old
And the future was all dreams.

Published for the first time at age thirteen, Ms. Davidson was writing before she could read, dictating stories for relatives to write down. Her poetry has appeared in the English textbook, Prisms of Poetry, as well as several student journals and magazines. She lives in Nova Scotia's Annapolis Valley with her husband. She is currently working on a novel.