

The Word Box

CHRISTOPHER BROOKHOUSE

We can't sleep.

I'm hungry, she says.

I know what she wants.

I go to look for it.

The season is stuck on winter.

The moon floats clear and cold.

I look at my feet.

I remember peering through the X-ray machine.

I saw my bones in their new Buster Browns.

I tiptoe through the living room.

The ghosts are writing sonnets,

Or contemplating solitaire.

The cards have naked women on them.

I find the word box on the pantry shelf.

I push my hand inside and finger around,

The way I used to search the crispies

For the ring with the zircon chip,

Guaranteed to turn blue in the presence of enemies.

I shake the letters out.
Tonight I find the L and O and V.
Only the E is missing.
Yesterday I couldn't find the L.
And before that . . . you get the point . . .

Sorry, I say when I lie beside her again.

Too bad you can't go out and buy
Letters when you need them, she says.

I outgrew my Buster Browns.
I pretended I had X-ray eyes.
I could see girls under their dresses.

That's silly one of my teachers told me.
He said, just reach into the word box.
You can invent anyone you like,
And do anything you want with them.

Zircon, I discovered, has a tendency toward blue,
At least around me it does.