

**From *Night Windows*, by Susan Lilley**

**Coquina Pink**

The swirling of the walls is what I remember first,  
the curls and bumps under my fingers,  
the faces, if you looked just right. The old house  
has been redone, I hear.  
I hear the old screen door to the pool squeal  
like us girls, daring each other on to new  
devilments and enchantments  
and contests of breath, will, and beauty.  
Nerves failing, I refused to eat the mysterious red berries  
from our grandmother's favorite bushes. We listened  
to the rustling gossip of the bamboo clusters, so thick  
they could not be penetrated or even seen through  
no matter who was hiding.  
The bright back yard was full of green and hissing  
and the sting of fire-ants.  
I think of you, the youngest of us,  
your buttery cap of blonde hair.  
The bad things you held back for years,  
now a dark family mythology of an almost-relative  
whose indistinct eyes and mouth beamed out pure evil,  
and in the same room, unspeakably,  
your innocence, your choking shame.  
The story is old now, like a relic left in the attic,  
but still bleeds bright when scratched open.  
Where was I? And your own chlorine-soaked,  
sunburnt sisters? Maybe swinging deep  
in the long back yard, our hair brushing  
the ground with every upside down sweep,  
poison berries plump on the twigs,  
the nervous bamboo chattering,  
the pool flickering like a blue flame.