

How to Grow Up Anti-War

Ten years old, listening to
All Things Considered
on the radio before school.
They must've been reading from
an early draft of *Generation X*:
The Bomb had just been dropped
and everyone was in the supermarket.
As it sunk in, I looked dejectedly
through the school bus window,
thinking

*Tomato soup mixed with blood,
rising around their ankles.*

Mom, what's the Cold War?

She told me not to worry:

if they bomb us

then we'll bomb them

and then there'll be nothing left.

She knew the silly president

could stumble on the red button

easy as the recently invented snooze.

Five-more-minute machines, both.

She told me right where the bomb hits
is the safest place to be. No rotting for her
no mutated winter, just instant evaporation.
I did not find this comforting, but it is still my policy.

(This year, in lecture, the astronomer said

This is the choice that stars make.)

So, when the long beep interrupted Benson

I knew if this were an actual emergency

we'd be driving as fast as we could

to a major metropolitan area.

We practiced for this in Sunday school:

Now and at the hour of our death.

During overcast Little League evenings

I'd stand in right field, listening

with a scrutiny previously reserved for sleigh bells

waiting for the sky to turn red

for the melted diamond

the crack and blister.

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Jane Cassidy was a member of the 2006 Ithaca Slam Team. She runs a weekly reading series in Syracuse, NY. She is the author of five chapbooks and has appeared in *The November 3rd Club*, *The Seneca Review*, *The Comstock Review*, and *Valley of the Contemporary Poets*. She has featured at such venues as V.C.P. and Beyond Baroque in Los Angeles, The Poets, Asylum in Worcester, Mass, and GotPoetry Live in Providence, RI. She has a degree in Art History from Syracuse University, and also paints things.