

Poem: *Turning Point*
TURNING POINT

You know how to empty the dishwasher,
set the table, warm the waffles.
And you know how to make the lunches,
write their names on the brown paper bags,
slip in a juice box. And after that, you can
get them into the car, make sure they buckle up,
back down the driveway
and be on time.

But what if, when you dropped them off,
at the light, instead of turning right
to come home and finish with the kitchen,
then the bedrooms and the yard, what if
you went left, through town,
past the cleaners, past the post office
and the tax attorney's whose yellow sign
has yellowed?

What if you kept driving?

You would eventually arrive at the outskirts of your life.

The best time to leave would be Thursday,
when your daughter stays after school
for drama club and your sons have intramurals.
That would give you
extra time.

That morning, before departure, you would need
to hold them tighter, hide your knowing tears,
leave extra cash in the kitchen drawer.

But it is hard to speak of these things, how you love
your children and need to leave them, how
you know you want out but don't know
where out is – the convent, Butte, Milwaukee?

Today, you wave goodbye, know,
as you watch them cross the street,
that you may never see them again.

You look forward, stop at the light, and,
with your little finger, flip the blinker
up.