

# My Neighbor in the Apartment Across the Hall

*by* Robert James Russell

She's an obese woman whose clothes  
don't fit: shirts that ride up too high  
her belly hanging out her pants  
suctioned to her strangely pegged legs.  
Her ballooned cheeks are always chapped pink  
her lips little slivers peeled back over  
small beige teeth like riverstones  
set in swollen gums. Her hair is  
luxurious but she doesn't seem  
to know what to do with it; she often  
touches loose strands when people walk by,  
a nervous tick perhaps.  
Her sister is always visiting and they  
gather outside my window  
pacing and talking in loud practiced dialogues  
about their collective woes.  
She's married to a Mexican man  
half her size named Marco whom  
she fights with daily, usually about  
their daughter, a small wispy thing  
that never makes a peep.  
She has eyes like wildfires  
but you can tell, talking to her even briefly,  
that she doesn't expect to get  
to where it is she wishes she was going.

