

# CHICAGO REVIEW

---

Alka-Seltzer

Author(s): Elizabeth Alexander

Source: *Chicago Review*, Vol. 41, No. 2/3, From Chicago (1995), pp. 9-11

Published by: [Chicago Review](#)

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25305929>

Accessed: 28-11-2015 08:59 UTC

---

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of the Terms & Conditions of Use, available at <http://www.jstor.org/page/info/about/policies/terms.jsp>

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.



*Chicago Review* is collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to *Chicago Review*.

<http://www.jstor.org>

## *Alka-Seltzer*

My mother lets me  
have it every night,

I tell the 'sitter,  
who comes Saturdays,

ignores us for Motown,  
my mother's high heels.

She's diabetic,  
Mother whispers, please

Behave.  
    When the baby-

sitter thinks we are  
sleeping she peeps

through the door-crack  
and giggles. I see

her eyes and never  
sleep, not ever.

She locks the bathroom  
door, to take her

medicine, she says.  
We bang when she's been gone

too long. "I'm cleaning  
out my bunny-hole,"

she says, "with witch-  
hazel."

She sees me  
read the dictionary,

asks me words. Do you  
know what this is?

Say it. Do you know  
this other word?

Say it. Do you know  
what a pussy is?

A cat, I say. Then  
say it. The word

in my mouth like gristle  
or giblets, a stone

in the rice, by mistake.  
I run upstairs and

later pee the bed,  
and later curse

the babysitter dead. Next  
time she comes I say

I have a disease  
in my stomach, I need

Alka-Seltzer, like  
insulin, in cold

water, in my favorite  
glass, the one etched

with turquoise horsemen,  
the taste on my tongue

of metal, salt, and lemons.