

*Jeanette Beebe*

## NO CORN, NEVER CORN

The corn grew up to the porch of my grandmother's house where five cities merge around a soft bend of the Mississippi, a sea of warm green sameness. The rule was no one could talk about the old crop. I never got the timing right, even though the schedule was regular, as regular as they come. The stalks had to stay in place to mark the ground where they gave up, where they broke mid-season, brittle and bare. I remember the glass door in the back got stuck—it had a small SLIDE TO OPEN sign taped to it. It was tricky: it caught on itself whenever someone tried to walk through it. We would follow the groove in the floor to try to fix it, and load the folding card table with plastic plates, serving spoons. Out, out, out, step into the pit: a home, a nation, a circus, a court, a holy place, applause. Those knives came in a cardboard box, packed tight like straws.