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The Chairs

By Karen Loeb

The way she pressed the two
green leather chairs together
facing each other
bringing sheets, blankets and
a pillow, she knew what she
was doing. Creating a bed
in the living room, not far from
the kitchen, she helped the sick one
of us climb over the arms and
sink onto the sheet. In this way
we survived chicken pox,
measles, strep throat, mumps
and any other kind of pox that
swam our way in the sea of
illness that came in waves.
Vaccines were a magic potion
dreamed about in labs. The
only way to be immune was to
catch it and survive it. In this way
I sailed through my childhood,
narrowly avoiding the underwater
grotto of polio where many floated
and few returned, where summer
with fireflies and fireworks
swimming in the lake and running barefoot
was the season where most parents
drowned in their fears.

Karen Loeb often writes about China and adoption, and some of that work can be found in the anthology *Shifting Balance Sheets* (Wising Up Press). She has taught creative writing for many years at the University of Wisconsin Eau Claire.

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