

Put-In-Bay - 1996*Katharine Studer*

We named it our island,
Three months, sand in our hair.
Suffering through sleepless nights,
burning backs and peeling shoulders.
Fifteen, "Let's live" you said
so we served hash by day
at that small coffee house
on the corner, watching
boats sail in with men
who smelled like work and fish.
We watched the women with red lips
until we learned to charm
fisherman with painted smiles
that earned us a fresh dollar,
sometimes two for a pinch.
"Good girls don't allow pinches"
you said, but we decided
we were not going to be
good that day. We learned
to charm our way

through that summer of eighty-two,
we mastered the plan,
trading in our white dresses
for menstrual red bikinis
that taught us how to be
women in just a day.