

Dandelions

When the EXIT sign for the trailer park went missing,
guys stayed around longer. Evenings came
with cigarette smoke and barbecue sauce kisses,
and ended with Bubba windin' up in Mama's bed.
To love without signs seemed one way not to get lost.
But what of the white rivers on Mama's hips,
the tracks on her arms, or potholes on her skin?

Bubba left like my daddy did:
in the middle of a birthday party,
with the cake already served. I found Mama
sitting on our porch, her head resting on the screen door,
the skeeters getting her because she was on the wrong side.

Mama, wiping away black from under her eyes
with one hand while tapping ash off her cigarette with the other,
said they're all just scared:
Their wings get antsy when their roots start growin'.
I guess that's why dandelion seeds can fly.

Pastel Portrait

Dark eyes, sculpted brows, small full lips, and hair
like ripples on a lake.

My sister and I, scared and crying,
would run into our parents' room to wail into the pillows,
our mother above us, serene, in her wood and glass case.

With puffy eyes and throaty voices
we would tell the pastel portrait
our grievances against our father,
his booming voice still echoing through the house.

Tired from crying like only a child can,
we would fall asleep, our cheeks still wet.

The squeak of an opening door would come
after the sun slipped past the trees.

Warm arms, heated by years of love,
would scoop us up and place our heads into her shoulders.

Hair in wisps, lips thinned, skin wrinkled,
our mother was home.

Compatibility

is the big spoon under the stirring spoon in the left hand drawer,
the honking laughter of a girl in the voracious ear of a lonely boy,
the autumn wind stirring different tree leaves to meet on the sidewalk,
the ordering of a one-topping pizza because we both like Italian sausage,
the one skein of blue yarn needed to crochet a winter hat,
the space between my right-hand fingers and your left-hand fingers,
the old extension cord fitting the plug of the new Christmas lights,
the half-inch distance between the top of my head and your chin when we hug,
the hollowness of baby bird bones combined with newly feathered wings in the spring,
the alignment of the stars in our eyes when we kiss,
the white polka-dots on my red swim suit in the summer sun,
the concave curve of your body under the convex of mine,
the beginning of my thoughts ending in the actions of yours.

Goddess

Sunday night you say my body is a goddess:
writhing, rocking, raising above you in the bed
you haven't been in for two weeks.
The crescent of my waist and constellation of kisses on my neck
place me in the moon's sky,
the only time you take communion.
You pay tithes to my temple, give praise whispered on my lips;
raise your hands high to lift your spirits,
As I lead you into the crescendo, you come into me
like faith bursting from a choir.
The east tears off its clouds of darkness and
you leave, soul saved, while my divinity fades.