

The Mug My Aunt Made

Tonight I sip tea from a mug
my aunt molded and spun.

Brown tree rings of clay stretch up,
curve into the lip. Below,

waves of sky blue melt into olive
as if hugging the mountain range

at whose feet my aunt built her house
with her lover. Further down,

colors blend: purple, rose, indigo,
sienna streaking across the bottom

like the Painted Desert. I fit three fingers
through the thick handle. There's even

a pressed platform on which to rest
my thumb. I look like my aunt. Perhaps

that's why she sent her mug home with me.
Maybe it's because we both dream in Italian,

recite our prayers through art. Or maybe
it's her secret way of telling me that she too

knows how it feels to be broken,
haunted by ghosts from the past.

Folding my palms around the same piece of earth
my *zia* shaped and smoothed, I think of the message

I received from my mother earlier this morning,
study the mug's glazed-over palette,

wonder if these particular shades
can also be found in the Mediterranean

where my aunt was sailing, celebrating
her ten year anniversary, and if the hues

bled together when the blood vessel
inside her brain burst.

Calling Long Distance

When I call you today,
I'll imagine you sitting
at your kitchen table,
hillsides of your beloved Heidelberg
wrapping around you,
sea pinks blooming on your balcony
as they do in May.

I'm sure Uncle Johnny will answer,
neither of us surprised by the other's voice,
after all, it is your birthday.

We'll talk for an hour or so
without mentioning your name,
but you'll hang between us like a sheet
draped over a clothesline, a lifetime of memories
flapping softly, brushing against us
as we reach for pins
to keep you from blowing away.

When I Leave

I will leave the moon with you.
She will be your night light
pushing darkness away
so you may sink safely into slumber.

She will be your keeper of time.
You may count the days
through her opening and closing eye,
your grief gradually waning.

She will be your shield
deflecting the sun's blazing revelations,
softening his sharp glare, so you may
gaze into the heavens, unblinded.

She will be your balloon,
her beam a silken string.
Whenever you ache, reach high,
and she will lift you up to me.

Persephone

Each spring, I bring my
mom daffodils, embrace her,
palms spilling sunlight.

Night Blooming Jasmine

Your hands, two wings,
shivering with summer heat
spread like a butterfly across my back, and I
unfold
arch my opalescent face toward the waxing moon,
open my mouth, pour my delirious sweetness
into the sticky night.