

intimation

this is the word r a p e now imagine
a man rea ch ing for what
hasneverbeenhis a rosebud
blouse.

he con strains her
arms.

there is no word l o v e

you want him to stop
don't you
i guessed as much he resists,
but f ails

a skeletal tree hang ing above
hiseyes

the word a b u s e is written

allo v e rhim
youwatchyougrimaceyouscream
you close
your eyes
i guessed as much don't y o u

happiness is

a man working doubles
seven days a week
an empty bed and full cradle
as he smokes himself to nightmare

a man turning a spade
in the rich soil
sowing his father's crop
his broken bones twisting in the churchyard

a man at a coffee shop
observing his failed students
his days blinking by
fresh brewed *Sumatra* in his hands

a man on a motorcycle
Saturday afternoon ride
wind threading through
his ginger beard

Wrinkles

She is his soul
caregiver. He waits
for her each day
every fold of his hands
every ripple of his brow
furrows deeply, creases
like the slacks she irons,
each leg carefully pressed
caressed and steamed
with her caring fingers
guiding the metal weight across
the crinkled, starched linen pant
that his body will only
burrow into wrinkle.

[when you said *friend*]

[1]

Momma never said
 where they buried him –
 I still don't know.
 But uncle, I know your smile
 when you looked at him,
 your eyes could not
 let him go. You looked afraid –
 not like the steely man
 I knew you to be.

[2]

You were my favorite uncle
 who spirited me away
 to Sardis lake.
 We flew in your night Firebird,
Batmobile,
 with the windows down
 and the music loud as High-
 way 6 tied our hair
 in knots.

[3]

Your new chairs smelled
 like bergamot and bitterweeds
 upholstered with craspedia
 and poppy seeds.
 Your *friend* had the same name as daddy
 who did not want us around him.
 Robert, the man who brought
 chairs to your living
 room. He was kind to us,
 and Rachel loved him.
 I knew what you meant
 when you said *friend*
 but my sister just heard uncle.

[4]

At Christmas,
 I sat next to you, and so did he.
 Daddy hated him there –
 Sort of,
 but not *really*.
 Nana gave us gold party pop –

pers, not red & green.
They smelled like the Fourth
of July, or a fired cap gun.
Robert's paper crown was torn
so you put your red one on his head.

[5]

Rachel said his thumb moved
as he lay in state. You
didn't hear her, you were drowning.
I saw you smile at him,
look at his eyes. You realized
what you feared,
Robert was gone.
And your eyes were
not x-ray strong.

[6]

He will never leave you
Dear uncle,
 He lives with you still
 In your
 Veins, in your granite countertops.

137 Leighton

My heart pulled
against the wind
to Leighton.
My skin goosed, flesh
fickled, as it does when
a lover is near, as it does,
as it did, as I drove
past a place
I could no longer call
my home. *here*

The pace was wide
and the chill fleeting
I pulled off to the side
to regain my stiff seating
but every time I pass Leighton
as I do
as I did
as I'll do again
again the place we once walked
I can't shake it
my memorial thoughts
as my mind and
as my body whispers
to halt here. *home*
as they do.