

Permission Slip

Mother is sleeping on the kitchen floor
a yellow pill in her right ear, a blue pill in the left
her arms, and tongue slack.

Mother is heavy so I let her sleep right there
Eyelids stiff as frozen rubber
I carry the scratchy wool blanket from the mattress
and tuck it around
her body feels like sopping laundry

The pads of my chicken bone fingers are
too tender for chores like these.

I started kindergarten today.
I wrapped a can of Coke in crinkly aluminum foil
to keep it cold for lunch. Just like Mother
it did not work. I drank my syrup warm and never
whispered a word about being foiled.

The leftover tin turns into a helmet. I crown myself
march back to the kitchen and tell Mother
I will stand guard tonight.