

Tin Can Telephone

One night by the window, I said his name, *Darius*,
into an empty soup can. Silence.

Crab Apple I said, our code word
for the bitter he once dared me to bite into,
he dropped his bike and watched. Silence.

I saw the bright hall through a crack
in his bedroom door, the red of his mother's sari.
He slept, his back to the window, the window closed,
the rope of shoelaces we'd knotted together
slack between us.

Touch

He stands in my bedroom doorway and goes on about how this is it then, I won't see him again, and I sit in my antique chair and cradle her while she sucks out the last ounce of her bottle, and he shivers a little in that threshold— *don't try and call me, nothing. When my daughter's older, I'll tell her the truth*— and the silence turns pink in my mouth, then orange, then blue.

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At five, he romped
barefoot in a pigpen
in the Dominican Republic,

his aunt would sterilize
a needle and pick whipworms
from the bottoms of his feet.

He, with a matching pair
of sneakers for every outfit,
whose rubber soles jut

just over the edge of my bed,
my incredulity matched
by wonder. In my dream,

the worm's pointed head
pricks through the skin
of my index finger. Tweezers

finally grip the exposed
eighteenth of an inch,
and it stretches,

stretches, its length
lodged in my flesh,
til the tweezers slip

and the worm, still one,
snaps back into
position.

The Descent

Why do they ignore me?

My sister and mother, who don't

look themselves but svelte, decorous
in frosted lipstick.

The voice says *you died*.

Me? The ghost of this house
where I found what I stole? A broken

VHS and the diary
of the gastroenterologist I dated.

On the mantelpiece,
a picture of me at The Gala leans

without frame. How blithe I was

with my chipped nail polish
and glitter wallet, how little I cared

my hair clung to the fringe
of the circular rug...

Dream Feed

The infant hatches from sleep,
a hiccup, chirp and gasp
reel me from bed
to the edge of her crib. Her eyes
jerk upward.

In minutes, they'll latch onto mine
as I push the latex nipple
between her lips, hurry
to quell her rage.

She bats the anime toy clipped
to the car seat where I've placed her

while I mix Similac and nursery water,
my panic, a current an inch below the coos

One second Baby.

Hold on Honey,

I'm here—

My Father Fixes my Portable A/C

If it would only grip, he says, just a little,
the plastic hose clamped between his bent
knee and elbow, as he tries to screw the open
end into the “duct”. I now know the name
for it— the part I circled with painters tape
from when I moved in six years ago (adhering
to itself, it twisted thin as twine as I brought it
round the hose, then patched it, again and again,
when chutes of humid air pushed through,
arrows of sun piercing clouds). Even the word
“grip” fits, what neither part will do as he seals
their tenuous kiss with aluminum tape, welding
the last few grooves of the hose to the duct’s
ridge. It depends on the right tool, I know,
as he steps back, wipes his brow on the short
sleeve of his polo.