

Test-Subject Son

He remembers eating Grammy's cupcakes for breakfast,
the half-moon bite from the whole stack of bologna
while his momma slept.

A string of her boyfriends,
the shabby apartment they shared with one of them,
reluctant caregiver during her graveyard shift.

Deadbeat parent, to faceless sperm, to new father,
"Daddy" but never "Dad"
rolling thick off his tongue.

His original last name different from hers
and the one he later shared with sisters ten and twelve
years younger.

Those innocents, oblivious to his position,
unchanged by legal ceremony and years of
playing house.

A Galaxy Far, Far Away

She keeps the Star Wars collectibles in boxes
in the garage attic.

Han Solo forever searching
through plastic confines,

Wampa snow-creature, white and furry,
frozen in predatory pose,
beloved by his baby sister,
fangs and all.

She thought about selling them
once,
at a garage sale.

The couple inquiring, casually checking
eBay,
bids on comparable treasures...

In the end, she couldn't
let go,
sealing the worn flaps,
packaging tape stuck
to her fingers.

Fly Home

She shares a room and her last years as a teenager, nursing in the dark morning hours before high school. A peach-colored prom dress, milk-soaked and heavy with the weight of worry. The boy stores no memories of youthful hands cracked and bleeding for the price of minimum wage, her late nights searching keys on the electric typewriter, clicking towards an opposing destiny.

She remembers...holding the boy and the thick cardboard book, "If I had a Little Airplane," dimpled hands clapping with recitation of the verses, delight at the familiar ending-reunion of mother and child.

Time introduces a father, an architecture of fortitude and family. Olive hands to mold a Pinewood Derby car and steady the T-Ball stand, coaching the team and maintaining expectations with each strike-out.

Nature makes way for two dancing sisters with ribbon and tutus. At last, the quintessential family, full cast and crew. Embracing the very essence of "Mother," loving hands prepare home-cooked meals. But the unhinging ferments.

Cocktails replace bedtime stories. Dredlocks and a VW Bus docking at the 11th hour, anesthetized to the tether between them, camouflaged. Three cracks at college and the same in the ER, he follows suit-a drink in hand, a storm in his brain.

Gray hands caress the print, velvet wine muting her throat, she hears his earnest promise, "I'll fly home to you."

Radio Flyer

Pieces of a motorcycle
contained in rubber tubs and a rusty Radio Flyer wagon,
disassembled beyond reconstruction—

cluttering the third bay of my garage.

Like a messy guest,
a bad influence of a friend-
he couldn't ride a bicycle until he was eleven for Christ-sakes.

Like some grade B, Lifetime movie's
overdone attempt at foreshadowing,
his first father figure damaged his brain

soaring from a motorcycle.

For years, I've housed the puzzle-pieces
of this monstrosity, guaranteed my boy's safety,
my ability to sleep.

Now, cleaning the garage,
mattresses and broken dryers,
and bikes of thirty-year-old sons

have to go.

The truck is loaded with the wagon,
and hundreds of parts
the boy will "never be able to reassemble."

After the five-hour trip
to Gunnison
and delivery of this devil's

shell and all its guts...

Will I admire the spacious garage
only ghosts of Radio Flyer wagons
before the rust, shiny and red?