

The Door Flies Open

There's my mother at the kitchen table
with a bowl of soup.
I'm around the doorframe
where she goes to talk on the phone, twisting
the cord into the other room.
My dad is upstairs with the nurse.
A thread of steam
pulls up from the soup. The spoon
stays on the table. Sometimes
you have to watch the icicles in the windows,
check for movement in the clouds.
We can hear the nurse walking on our ceiling,
the toilet flushing in the wall, the cuckoo clock
that my dad brought back from Florence.

See how my mother has pulled back, like a sticker?
The world keeps falling into her
like the trees in the car windows.
She loves the names of the streets here:
Cedar, Walnut, Ash, all going north
to Priest Lake where they spent the week
Nixon resigned, sat in the car to listen to the news,
said *Why are we here in these evergreens,*
one after another? This isn't New York.
They don't have to clomp their shoes down hard
on the sidewalks, carry sandwiches
and umbrellas. This is no longer
the blue-mountained future.
She dips her spoon in the soup, cool enough now.

Nocturnal

When I can't sleep,
she lets me sit next to her
in the lamplight and read.

She is drinking wine from a glass
that opens like a flower.
It shines

in a room that has laid down shadows
over the television, the stereo,
the way you put a bird to sleep.

Soon even my mother will sleep,
and I'll stare at the shapes
by myself.

It looks like we're moving,
everything covered for the truck.
I should roll up the rug with the circles

of braid that sit in the arches of our feet.
And we'll take the red curtains
and my brother

and the boxes of sleep in the closet
because we'll want to remember
what it felt like to live here

for the last three winters
of Richard's life
and this one when we stayed up together,

the clock in the hallway still ticking,
and every hour
that bird shooting out.

This Time We'll Go to Kentucky Fried Chicken

for Tom

You were the one with the body
that could balance on a skateboard,
dive into a pool, the water
closing behind you.
And you could hold your breath
at the bottom, watch the sunlight shatter
on the tile.
Your eye marked where to send a ball
and it would hit
the backboard, the mitt—
you could chart a trajectory
from the boy in the doorway
who stood next to me and looked at our mother
not getting out of bed
after our father died,
his bed made, all the stripes pulled up vertical
under the pillow
where his head would never leave
another dent.
You said, *If she dies too,*
we'll go to Kentucky Fried Chicken
not Wendy's
where we went after the funeral
that you spent driving your matchbox cars
up and down the lines of wood
in the pews, steering the small wheels
around the knots underneath
the soft polish.
You tried to be quiet, but I could hear you
making your car noises in your throat.

Coney Island, 1977

Every time the Octopus
lowers its metal arm, my mother yells
at the man with the lever,
I want to *get off!*

We have come back East
to visit Andrea from the wedding
with the sheath of blond hair
and the row of silk roses
under her breasts.

It's the summer after my father's death.

There's salt in the air.

I want to *get down.*

We saw a turbaned fortune-teller
in a glass box. I think he's broken. No one
is putting quarters in the slot.

Later my mom will show me
the saltwater taffy turning on its rack.
She will dip her still-young legs in the Atlantic.
This is her old ocean.

After we leave, Astroland will close
and people will come back
to stare at the wooden roller coaster
and the fortune-teller.

Finally, the Octopus's arms grow heavy
and he slows down like he's a real
octopus, miles out and down
in the water, home now on the bottom.

He drops his arms like seaweed,
elegant and boneless.