

A Cedar Closet

As the air darkens with the muted, lilac
storm, I realize I am happy

with this dimness. The rain holds everyone
in their homes. I realize

my grandmother is dead.
Her eyes, so wonderfully dim. Her closet, too—

raised above the creviced wood floor
like the lace pillows on her captain's bed.

I was so easily tucked into her closet—
the cream interior so heavy and deep

with wood, unlike the wood composite
of Mother's chest of drawers. Spider webs, fluffed

and guarded with hair nets and bobby pins—
corners blooming with translucent forests.

No cotton, only fabrics that draped sagged
towards me from padded, satin hangers,

saved meticulously from Dillard's nightgowns.
And so when I see an indie girl

slink by with a charcoal cigarette and silk-
poly blend shift-dress the color of a resin Virgin

Mary, I give her my umbrella, worry
if water stains are like moths

and wear holes into layered things
I never got the chance to love.

Full-Volume

An American Idol finalist is on Jay Leno.
She never gets interviewed, she was only cast
to sing. The color of her hair, once
walnut, is now the bottom fringe of a golden
retriever's tail. I already see
the other women in the living room
scrunch their noses like I do
when I watch my mother pluck
wonky eyelashes from her lids.
And by the way,
do you know my mother
puts on extra thick mascara at night,
because *it makes the room darker?*
My boyfriend's mother, crunching on pickle,
mentions, *that silk dress makes her hips
look too wide.* I pretend I don't see
him look at her, and say, vehemently,
she had an eating disorder, Mom.

But his Mom doesn't know
what eating disorders are, and she eats

the thick, seedy center
of the pickle and shrugs,

*So? Her hips are still too wide.
I like her bracelet, though. Very bold.*

I excuse myself to the bathroom,
remember an old roommate who plucked

ten eyelashes for every pound
she gained, my mother

who blackened hers to blotch me
out as I slept beside her.

I stare into the mirror's Colgate splatters,
notice how my lashes are even and full;

golden like a retriever's, so loyally
curled at the foot of the bed, waiting

for a jerk or a whisper, *come warm me,
I dreamt of your father, again.*

Faith

1.

On our refrigerator door, my mother fixed
the April '06 cover of *Fitness*.
The model, nameless but pretty enough

to make the cover, was fashioned
with two jeweled slashes of aqua
across her breasts and hips. Her smile,

brilliant and unrelateable, gleamed awkwardly
next to somber Our Lady of Something
magnets fixed to her glossy corners:

Mary cradling a wilting Jesus, Mary unaware
of the snake about to nibble her toes, Mary baring
that heart and watching my mother sip Coke and carrot juice.

2.

My mother, the Neo-Pagan-Gnostic-Catholic,
displays the women of our society as icons,
believes things written down

become reality. I found
my old Lisa Frank diaries in her bathroom,
my adolescent entries followed by her pleas

for millions, or at least a body
to attract them. I moved out
after she walked in on me, gasping

along the treadmill,
an eighty-five pound hamster squealing *please*,
while she breathed, *what a beautiful angel*.

3.

Yesterday, after a steady two weeks
of Tupperware full of Dole green beans and mixed vegetables,
(the kind without potatoes, potatoes are nothing

but starch and guilt), my mother
put on my roller blades,
the ones she never let me use,

and took to our neighborhood

like it was a Sonic.
She delivered fertilizer to a neighbor's

shriveled Wal-Mart petunias, drizzled
hose water onto a dry-looking cactus patch
a couple blocks over. Soon, she was wearing

those slashes of aqua, her mouth full of pearls.
Then, she tells me, a car startled her and she stumbled back,
breaking her wrist in two places.

I wondered: was her house as empty as I pictured it?
When she stumbled back inside, perched
her hips on my father's

old blue recliner, centered in her bare living room,
did she wail the way she did when we found our cat
foaming from the mouth, unable to move?

3.

I only have a microfridge, magnet-less,
but last night
when I got up for a yogurt,

I thought I saw that pretty model on the black door.
I imagined my mother, lying on her hot sliver
of the king-sized bed, listening to her space

heater as it cycled on and off, waiting
for the Valium to reach her arm.
I imagine her body nesting

in my old Christmas pajamas, cut
at the waist to accommodate the girth
she never wanted me to have.

And then I'm on the tile,
cradling our wilting wrist, sobbing prayers
I never say anymore, remembering

how dinner was a Lean Cuisine; dessert,
a Skinny Cow; and delicious,
window-shopping at Sears during swimsuit season.

You, as Breakfast

Your voice is like cream, bubbling and wild
in my hot stomach, overfilled
with froth and your early morning phone calls,
*I'm not going to work
today, I feel ill.* You wish
I would come home
and pet your hurt like a cat.
Your sad quiet is milk-sodden
cereal that fills me up
to my chest, leaving no room to breathe.
I hear the breaths *pop*,
squelch like soft grapes.
I cannot eat any more
of you, but my mouth is still wide as you pour
into me, talking about reincarnation
and how God saved all your hurt
for this one life,
and how maybe I am like a cracked egg
gluing itself to the Papier-mâché cups
of the carton. I'm sick,

but I keep my mouth wide and stuff you in:
the childhood loneliness you shared
with too many cats in a backyard
of hibiscus and Gulf hurricanes; your aging
body that you poison
with fast food and religion; the way you loved me
too much. You say,

you were never supposed to leave me,
and become coffee, scalding all the pink inside me.
I'm left wading in the murk of your taupe bitterness, waiting
for what people say is worth a burnt tongue.
They say the taste will remind me
of home and a stocked kitchen,
and the way you used to wake me for school
by waving an Eggo waffle in my face, with a promise
of chocolate milk and Advil.