Thoughts on a Mother’s Suicide/Scatterings of You

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Thoughts on a Mother’s Suicide/
Scatterings of You

An elegy for our mothers
—The note said, Forgive my
selfishness. It was her only
selfish act so I did.

When I found you,
After prying open the locked door,
The smell of your blood in the heat
Must have been like it was
When I pulled in my first breath,
Doctor syringing my nose,
Me covered with the warm tricklings
From the cuts that made room for my emergence.
I found you in the dark
(Quilts hung over the curtain rods
On a sunny day),
The splattering dimly clear.
I resealed the door
And dialed for help
as images of you
Drifted out of the wooden grain
Of the coffee table.

The dullness in my eyes
And my paleness told you
One of my headaches would soon melt away
And you’d start your ritual—
Closing curtains,
Turning off stereos and TV’s,
Placing the bucket beside my bed.
As I vomited
You would hand me a Kleenex
And apologize
Because you couldn’t do more.
Thoughts on a Mother's Suicide

The yipping ricocheted
Between houses and across the snow
until you could not bear it.
I watched your scarfed head
Turning, looking, as you left your prints
Trailing you.
My breath on the window fogged you from sight
As you rounded the Hissabeck’s house
And I felt the silence as you returned
And told me the Miller’s dog
Had wound itself around the clothesline pole.
You left your boots by the door
And the snow slid off of them,
Leaving the tiles shining wet all day.

After the product of my womb
Stilled and was scraped
Out of my body
And everyone else’s thoughts,
We went shopping
To get me away from the nursery
Stillborn next to my bedroom.
We looked at shoes, kitchen appliances,
And plants to hang from the porch.
As we following our metal cart
Toward the checkout stand
We passed a clearance display
Of baby sleepers
That I automatically fingered through
Until I remembered.
I froze in the middle of the aisle,
The pain wracking from my abdomen
Up through my lungs and throat,
As you waited beside me,
Not pulling me away
And not checking for stares.
Pearson-Vander Broek

You talked me into the party
I didn't want to throw.
You came early and we stacked ham sandwiches
And cheeses on crackers.
You dusted and wiped mirrors
Until the doorbell rang.
When only half the guest list appeared
You sent me blushed looks,
Ate more than you'd ever eaten before,
And ordered Tupperware you already had.

My images of you splintered away
As the police and ambulance arrived
And our yard filled with neighbors
And strangers driving by.
Finally, your sheeted body
Was wheeled through the door
Through which you'd carried groceries
And yelled out supper time.
I was left alone,
Your last thoughts in my hands,
Staring at the tracks
The gurney left on the carpet.