

1. Poem as a Parting Gift for an Indifferent Father

I gave you those teacups,
golden dragons and cast-iron
black of my tongue.

A filament: my body holds
you like a blade between teeth
you like a snowflake in a blizzard

or the child asking for soup.
My apologies to you all;
I haven't anything left for you

to drink from.
No. Not drink from like
a mouth responding

to thirst, but
drink from like hands
sucking the heat from

a body with silence &
somewhere in Yakima, a patio
has red umbrellas, touch-me-nots,

azaleas, zinnias, poppies,
a cigarette slowly choosing
to become smoke

in the man's hand who we
don't hear much from him
anymore. Only the clank-clank-

clank of iron jangling
from his backpack.
Who will be there

to listen? Each of his steps
a counting down to
how close he is
to oblivion.

2. Elegy for That Which I Turned to Ash

I wore the strawberry dress the day
I realized I knew nothing

about how you woke each morning
comforted only by the blanket you kept,

how you slept soundly knowing
you weren't there to tuck me in.

If I could've imagined as a girl of nine
that you knew more than me,

I wouldn't have turned my mouth
into a candle that I re-lit

each time I saw you. Grandma was always so worried
about what would stumble out

from your mouth that she didn't see the thick
smoke pouring from mine.

Tell me what you were like as a girl, I said,
shoving my hands into the dress pockets.

I was a gymnast, my mother smiled, *watch*.
She twisted her whole body into a knot

on the carpet. I could think of nothing to say, even
now, no more questions. Unfurling herself,

my mother split her legs horizontally
with the ease of a blue heron opening

its impeccable wings to the moon each morning,
like an inhale you take before the sun breaks

the horizon: we see this animal only by the light
that's been reflected onto it, onto us.

Try it, my mother was saying, pointing at my tightly
balled fists and crossed legs. I am 30

now. I am stretching my wings towards her,
fingers edging those memories I turned to ash.

3. Anniversary

We were marked

by the hour

the dark ate

you

