

When we fight

It is worse with your sister watching,
her black ponytail clocking
each breaking second as she leans
over the banister.

You toss your arm
into the air, so I flinch,
afraid that you will drop
your glass, shatter it to pieces.

If the family hears, I will smooth
flyaway hairs and step close,
try to press away the tension
before they see.

Last summer we sat on the pier
ankles touching, sipping cokes from glasses
like this one. We watched the ice float and shrink,
float and shrink.

Open Road

Remember Sundays,
when rainwater pooled in the gutters,
when dad's truck tarped in blue plastic
camped beside the curb.

We crouched on the back door mat,
yanked wool socks up
over our knees and laced sneakers
soft and shapeless.

The screen clacked
against the door frame as we plunged into rain.
Dad shimmed the canvas sheet from the roof,
leashed the edges to the truck bed.
Wedged underneath, we rolled together
like cigarettes slid smooth in their pack.

You pressed your palms beneath your chin,
but I liked the click my molars made
every time we hit a rut.

Yellow pavement lines proved where we had been;
we knew where we were going.
At the grocery Dad would silence the engine,
step to the street. Hips jutting into the metal bed,
eyes cold with waiting, we would peer from beneath
the tarp at stones embedded in the street.

Sometimes there would be water chestnuts,
salt water taffy that we peeled
from cellophane squares,
but remember, remember
each time, he started the engine.

When smoke settled on the air
he had lipped the first cigarette,
the pack of Marlboros tossed
like a deck of cards on the dashboard.

Ladybug Season

In the spring,
we creaked open jalacy windows
on the back porch to let in light.

I knelt on the countertop, plucked
thick-walled Mason jars from the shelf
and lined them up side by side.

Waiting, we peered along the window ledge
for sleek shells that would split,
wing across the room on a drift of air.

All at once they slipped through cracks,
flushed the peeling paint. You smoothed paper
beneath their shells, swept them into jars.

The tops strung taught with cling wrap
were bound with rubber bands. You passed me
scissors to prick *breathing holes* in plastic.

All day we cupped the jars,
thumbed the bleary glass.
Until we peeled back plastic;

to watch the ladybugs settle, settle, and lift off.