

*Dream in which the moon is replaced by my grandfather's lymphoma tumor*

i.

November, and my sister  
cried the color white, like  
lost hair, plastic bags.

December, and she said  
the sky had grown into  
our grandfather's jaw.

January, and narcotics  
were bitter. February,  
and the snow was like

bleach, like his brow  
laced with tissue, and  
cold, and we weren't

allowed to touch him.  
March, and a walnut  
casket, and his skin

smelled like lavender,  
sterile. No one said  
that the mortician

was wrong, that he  
preferred the jacket  
with the pearl cufflinks.

ii.

A fisherman, he used to like mangoes  
smeared in trout oil.

We caught bluefish  
together, dawn like low tide.

I miss him at potlucks,  
eating leftovers, looming

over the scallops. He always  
used extra salt.

iii.

He took his pipe when he went,  
smoking silver from a rose root, comets  
like violet burrs.

Hanging from the new moon  
like a buoy, he taught me that stars  
are jellyfish, and midnight is  
the sixth ocean.

iv.

My grandfather  
climbing the sky,  
mouth ajar  
like a salmon  
clicking its teeth  
against a lure.

He chokes  
on a net  
of soft vein,  
his lips  
a lighthouse  
with no  
lantern.

v.

He says that he can see  
infinity, face flushed grey  
and dripping with ocean.  
I can see nothing but fish,  
and he says *these are the things*  
*the astronauts don't tell us.*

*Sketches of a green card in Arizona*

The bartender's tango begins at midnight, sidewalks  
like freight trains, humming. She charts her way home  
through the churchyard: here is north, a bone, a tooth,

a tongue, a boy who is a god. Morning, a sky of crows,  
bruised like autumn snow, burnt plastic and reeking  
of home, where her brother fries tortillas with honey

and sips hot brandy from a lemon peel, spices sharper  
than his mother's perfume. She finds an uncle, cheap cigar  
dangling from his lips, chalked as the faces of the girls

he loves to kiss. Sunday morning mass, confession  
like warm sangria. Her aunt spills burnt papaya  
across linoleum tile, tells him that she loves him.

There is a cousin steaming broth with freckled fish,  
a brother heating stew in the third floor bathroom  
at midnight. She is an overturned sugar bowl, sleeps

through brunch, knows Jack Daniels better than *papi*,  
cinders in an urn, sitting on a windowsill. Yesterday,  
she spilled it. Her father billows like the moon.

*Spiced Wine*

Grocery boys sit cross-legged. Desperation  
is when daughters kiss neighborhood sons  
at seven o'clock on a weekday night, daughters

who pin rubies to their earlobes and call themselves  
Dido, brown lipstick like overcast November swings  
of bourbon. Desperation is when grocery boys

pour cherry tequila into their green tea, sour milk  
staining linoleum countertop like daughters who spend  
Sunday morning making spiced wine from scratch,

burning their tongues on ginger broth, sipping it slowly  
to keep warm. To keep warm, grocery boys sit cross-legged  
in the boiler room, asphalt wall against their backs,

flecks of black pepper on their chins. Jars of clover honey  
granulate in the supply closet, and the grocery boys  
are the first to notice, sitting cross-legged, whispering

about spiced wine, cherry tequila, sour milk and its whiteness.