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Music Lessons

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Music Lessons

Junior high, a time for lessons: watching my fingers
on the coin-like keys of the flute, the band teacher says
I was always meant to play. We are dedicated,
playing daily, flute section silver semicircle

so far from the trumpets, the tubas, back-row brass boys,
cut off by a sea of clarinets, curly-haired girls
who sit, suck their reeds, and eye the saxes one row back.
Listening to and making music, elementally

different acts. I prefer spending practices hidden
in the storage room, black instrument cases lurking
behind their latched, barred doors like animals in cages.
So many skills to master, when to breathe, how to blow,

lip position (perfect pucker); our first kiss was by
the oboe cubbies, metal bars latticing my back,
my shirt hitching like a cough on the latch, his fingers
sliding along my spine as on the keys of his sax.

Later, when uniform fittings take over the room,
we snicker as hands pass over us, assessing us,
afraid to move. The year progresses and I master
the whisper of pianissimo, forte's bolder

burst of sound, and the director lectures that we must
focus upon playing as one, that our crescendos
should shake the stage, seismic quakes, that if we can feel it
in our souls then we're doing it right.

Jayne Hughes, 2009