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Lot of My Sister

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Lot of My Sister

1.

The only prostitute I ever met
sat on a black bench and offered to share her bread with me.
She was not that pretty,
but the bread was warm
and I was cold
and did not want to offend her long, thin fingers,
silver ringed, palely stripping off skin of a French loaf, white flesh sacrifice.
She chewed with her mouth shut and her head
down,
a stoplight, a blood circlet on the back of her neck,
watching her feet, maybe,
watching the cars slow at the curb, listening to the clang of a garbage trunk,
the streetlights buzz blue and come on,
I don't know.
I asked if she was waiting for a ride.
She said, "It's waiting for me."

2.

I am such a bad daughter.
I know exactly what dishes I will take,
how many spoons are in the attic box,
sleeping inside each other's spine,
reflecting the incestuous union of back into mirrored,
glistening back.
I have even tried the ancient ring on my finger,
and yes, it fits, and yes,
where it was,
I feel a pressure,
a naked heaviness tattooed on my skin:
inheritance.

3.

When my mother was pregnant with you,
 our father worked nights,
 and I fell asleep with my small ear against the skin hill of stomach,
 listening.
 We lived in an apartment then,
 and I could hear music and people, a dog barking, someone crying.
 I wondered if these sounds came from inside her,
 or all around the three of us,
 or if they were the same place.

4.

You were born,
 and I was not old enough to see
 how summer would shake the whiteness from your arms,
 make your fingertips moon smiles the boys loved to kiss.
 When you wanted to give food to a girl on the street, I said,
 that is a prostitute, not a homeless person. *Walk faster.*
 I wish I could have said,
I am not the right sister for you.

Once a drunk man threw his harpoon arms around my waist,
 pressed his face into the unseen skin of my stomach, listening,
 and I let him.

Do you hear me?

I let him.

—Alison Stine '00