

## **A Phone Call to my Father**

I found your number while at work today.  
Thought about calling you and how  
the conversation would go. I suppose,  
I would try to distract us both  
from the silence echoing in the phone.  
Each moment of ringing a constricting  
zip tie around my throat. When you ask  
who I am, I tell you I often see

what I think is you in my reflection.  
I would want to tell you, I often dream  
I'm drowning. How as I slip into rem,  
I feel like I'm being pulled deeper  
into an ocean. The salt water laps  
against my eyes. I never reach the bottom.  
You will ask what I do and I will say

*I write poems.* Will you listen as I tell you  
that I've written so much about you, hoping  
one day you would stumble across it,  
hoping it would leave you breathless,  
your chest heavy, hoping like a whirlpool  
you would twist around the emptiness of me?

## **A Song for My Mother**

I could sing a song about the Florida heat  
and wind-whipped sand in the trailer  
park where we stayed, or the church trip

where you taught me to pray, eyes half  
shut, until you peeled me like a piece of gum  
from the pews as we fled from the chapel. How

I set on your chest the sandal the paramedics  
knocked off. They needed free hands to carry  
the pill bottles that made you crave the thumping

crackle of an album ending. In the hospital ,  
you kept trying to rip out your breathing tube.  
All I could think about is how you told me,

*Don't live just to exist. Don't be like me.*

You've never asked me to sing for you, just  
your father, who would have hated me  
for the emptiness that slow burned into you.