

Tender Creature

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We are an extension of our mothers.
Their love is curled up inside of us
Just waiting to unfurl and cascade into all of our dusty corners.
My mother is a tender creature.
She's always shooting into her body
Just so the world will stop beating her,
The way the waves break against cliffs.
I carry her pale blue eyes and roaring laughter.
I wish she lived in my ribcage so I could keep an eye on her
But instead she is staggering.
What do you do when your heart is beating outside of your body?
My mother is a peach just starting to soften
and I choke on my anger at the cruelty of this world.
She has been mauled and misremembered,
Gutted and gagged and left hardly breathing all the years of my life.

There's a version of her I never met:
She's valedictorian, she's off to a university
She's driving to Montana just for one summer.

Loving her is like breathing with one lung
Of course I'll keep taking in air
But I'm lightheaded
Close to fainting
I cannot climb any mountains
Or spend too long underwater
She has one lung and I have one lung and it's all we can do to keep breathing.

She is sleeping it off.
The icy wind whips all around her
Her temperature drops too low this Montana winter and
I'm jostled awake, states apart from her,
Her, my beating heart,
And I am shivering.