When my grandmother was 21
Her husband tried to kill her

My grandfather choked his wife
Until she blacked out
While my mother watched
Unable to move from fear

She loved my grandfather
And so did I

But I didn’t hear this story
Until he was dead

And my grandmother
Was thousands of miles away

Where no one
Not even the people who love her

Can reach her

When I was 18
My boyfriend choked me until I blacked out

I remember trying to slap his face  But I just couldn’t reach

I cried and gasped for air
Until everything was a haze

The next thing I remember  Is waking up and loving him

Loving him the way I loved my grandfather

I don’t know what it is about us  That makes people think

That we deserve to be broken
That we want it
But it seems like the two of us have fissures
In all of the same places

And these cracks can’t be filled in With promises and blood vessels

Both broken

As a child I wondered
Why she moved so far away from me

But now I know How hard it is

To wake up at night
And see everyone who has ever touched you

Every time You start to settle into sleep again

So I too wonder
If someday I will move

Deep into the woods
Where no one can find me

And tear up my dreams
When I was a child I was fascinated by my grandmother's makeup mirror. The different light settings: office, day time, night time, The smell of the hot plastic, and the array of products that were laid out before me.  

I would sit there for hours applying the different pigments, working carefully to mimic my grandmother exactly, but we never looked the same. It took me a long time to realize we never will.  

I don't have her face, or anyone's really. I don't look like my father or his sisters, and none of my cousins share these features.  

I think I know whose face this is. My mother's father who left her with only his chin and ruddy cheeks.  

In my mother's face you can find traces of my grandmother's Lampman family line. They are hidden in the crease of her eyes, and in the curve of her cupid’s bow.  

My face is that of a stranger. In comparison to the soft, familiar shape of the other women in this matriarchy it is alien.  

Maybe those times that I stared into the mirror, even before I knew that I had something missing, I was looking for the light that my face was supposed to bear, but I couldn't find it in any of the mirror's settings.  

So I keep putting on makeup
heavy, just like my grandmother's,
in the hopes that someday someone will say,
"She looks just like you."
Shared Shame

I don’t remember how old I was when my mother told me.

She said he was her teacher.  
He told her to stay after class,  
that she was a good little girl,  
the prettiest one he’d ever seen.

I don’t remember how old I was when she told me,  
but she was only twelve when it happened.

Her life began by having a grown man  
use her body like she didn’t live inside it.

When she told me she looked hollow.  
Like she was talking about someone else.  
Ended it with, “don’t tell your grandmother,”  
and then she walked away and left me  
sitting slack jawed and split in two.

I wonder what it took for her to say that.  
Why she wanted to tell me.  
Sometimes I wonder if she was frozen at that age.  
If she needs me to be the grown up  
because she could never become one.

Once we fought,  
and I looked in her eyes,  
and said, “you’ve spent your whole life as a victim.  
You have to stop running from the bad things that have happened to you.”  
She asked, “what are you talking about?”  
I ended it with, “you know.”

But now I know too,  
because I’m the one who can’t tell my mother  
that things have happened to me.  
That men have happened to me.  
That they have touched me without asking,  
that I didn’t say not to, didn’t feel like I could.

I wasn’t twelve.  
I was seventeen, and eighteen, and nineteen, and twenty.
An adult. Old enough to know it was all wrong.
But she didn’t.
She was so young,
Sitting there in her cat eye glasses,
with her hair in pigtailed ringlets,
and lace trimming the little socks
that stuck out of her polished Mary Jane’s.

She just wanted someone to love her,
and she thought maybe it would be him.
Well I guess I wanted someone to love me too,
and neither of us understood what was happening.

I never wanted to be like my mother,
never wanted to live inside a trauma,
but I feel men’s hands carve valleys in me
every time I am touched.

We are both victims,
and we can’t even talk to each other
because all that we want is to protect one another
from what we think we did wrong.
From people who have already hurt us.
People who could not be stopped.

When I told my mother that a man grabbed me at a party,
that he reached up my skirt
and sunk his hands so deep into my flesh
that I still can’t loosen his grip,
she asked,
“Why did you tell anyone?
Did you think they would take you seriously?”
Waxing Crescent

Sometimes I think about this body without fat
I think bones, blood, muscles
A heart, a tongue
Not fat

Skin tearing away to reveal a skeleton
Not masses of a life worn outside of my memory

I didn’t know that I was fat until other people told me
I don’t feel fat when it is just me.

But then I think about eyes
I think about everyone else
And what they see
And how I feel

And suddenly I don’t feel like my soul sits at my center
I feel my center tilt
Until I am on my scraped knees
With rocks in my palms

Every vein in my body screams as it bends over my curves
And I am so aware of the ways in which
I am forced to crush the substance of my soul into a body
That is then forced into clothes that make it look smaller
And I am crushed that I let myself be crushed
Restricted into this body that is on display and shows none of what it actually holds.

I wanted to eat the stars so that I could become one
But I decided to go on a diet and settled simply for affection
So I just didn’t shine as brightly as I dreamed I would.

I discovered that I’m not the stars because I am too large
I am the moon
And I have light that shines for miles
I have the energy necessary to pull water from the shore
And send it back with enough power to pull you down and drag you away

I belong here because I am not made of stardust
But I am made of the skin of the moon
And I shine even when it is dark

Even when I am only a sliver of myself I shine
And I always grow and come back whole
Because I am older than this world
And the people in it who think that they can tell me how I should look
When we are not even the same species.

No one ever told the moon that she could not take up the whole sky
So why does anyone think that they can tell me to be smaller
Than the space that all of the ideas inside of me
Demand to take up?