To My Mother  
Mary Kate Fitzpatrick

I.
I know that you lie awake and wonder why  
the skies only ever sing you goodbye,  
and why the sweet taste of pink love  
now feels like moss upon your tongue.  
I know that you drink blood merlot  
to fill the lonely nights,  
to lay a kiss of smeared lipstick  
upon those crystal goblets,  
just to have to gather them up the next day,  
wash off the sadness,  
and store it in the cabinet for later.  
I know that there is a sorrow like foggy morning  
inside your white bones,  
I know you have tried lemon juice,  
and bleach,  
and prayer,  
to get it out  
but still it is there.  
I know that if I stay very still,  
I can still hear what the inside of your heart sounds like-  
a clock,  
ticking slow,  
slower now,  

I think it is broken.

II.
On the phone,  
you speak softly with carefully chosen words  
and a pretend smile but I can  
still hear the resignation in your voice,  
those vacant and blank spaces  
between the stars.  
You seem to me:  
shredded silk  
or  
a bitten flower  
or  
a cracked mirror.  
I want to hold you,  
delicate,  
in my open palms,  
show you that I have your name
tattooed across my heart,
that I still wear your kiss
sewn on the inside of my cheek.
We say goodbye over oceans and blackened hours
and you breathe out slow-aching sunsets;
I can almost see the colors blend together before me,
The sky painted with your blood,
and your sacrifice,
and your sad love.
God,
it seemed so beautiful from a distance
but up close,
I cannot help but close my eyes-
it hurts too much to look.

III.
I lay my head on your chest
and it feels as though
I am holding a conch shell up to my ear,
your rising breath the salty song of the ocean.
Yours is the love that created the world,
from your blood, my rivers,
from your freckled flesh, my fields of wildflowers.
I don’t know how else to explain
that you look like what I imagine
magic
to feel like,
that on nights when we talk
alone
on the back patio,
your silhouette is watery in the silver light,
like the moon took all the time
to paint you-
all your shadows,
all your reflections.
You tell me that
I am your sunlight,
But you,
are my candlelight-
the constant,
luminous glow,
the unexpected warmth,
the way your orange blush
makes me look at my hands
and realize my very own light.
Maybe these words are just
a pressed flower to our love,
and maybe I will never be able
to enchant the stars
to follow you like you deserve,
but I can say this:
That all my velvet nights have birthed
from your great tenderness,
That your love feels
as comforting as
that small moment
just before I fall asleep.