

Anchors

Family banter at the after-supper table,
Amid cold green beans and mashed potatoes,
My sisters and their husbands are discussing life.
With trembling hands and low combovers, they parse reality.
“If Eve hadn’t eaten the apple, we’d live forever!”
Coughing laughter rings hollow.

They will fade, are fading -
Playmates, protectors, pillars of my childhood,
Saints of my youth.
They will die, are dying.
They will tear a hole in the ozone when they pass through.

When they have gone, who will remember with me?
Who will remember our brother,
Laughing as cigarette smoke curls between his shaking fingers?
Our mother stirring custard for ice cream?
Our father drawing water?
The lilac bush beside the wellhouse?
Singing hymns during dishwashing?
Who will remember but me?
How can I hold these memories alone?

Like an old house, a body falls in on itself.

My sisters and their husbands are crumbling before my eyes,

Tiny piles of sand before an inexorable wind.

“Dust thou art, and to dust thou shalt return.”

In them, I see my future.

I will fade like color leaching from an old polaroid,

Cream and sepia showing the faint outline of my existence,

Beside the place where they once were.

Even now, I become more transparent, less substantial.

My anchors are rusting away.

I am becoming untethered.

And soon I will be alone in a new way,

In another life.