

Our Scars

Sharpie-black nails
Etch Celtic
Carvings in my upper back;
Two Tylenol and an aspirin
(Which shan't be mixed) cannot
Quell the scars that creep up my back, spiderwise.

Burning cedar
Welters motes
All through our hair;
Though the hill was a highrise, we
Tumbled down and down and down until you, darling,
Sprained your wrist, snapped it really, red and wide and bloody.

My scar's still there—she's
Caressing me from nine hours away.

Her scar's still there—we're
Holding hands from nine hours away.

A Stranger's Teeth

Polaroid fire blesses Mount Penglai
Dad, 70s wafro engulfing his skull and
Tendriling down sideburns to touch
Fingers below his nose,
did what he always did and
Sneezed.

Mom held his image down and pasted it,
Soulless, with
Craft and technology
All in a click and a sputtered-out
Photograph, colors all wrong.

He's there:
Tongue pushed down to gum bed,
Eyelashes
Lungs pulled in so hard his gut followed

What came after is not captured.
The intake of misty air,
Opening of eyes and the sudden rediscovery of the world.

And one more thing.

Yakumo told us from his typewriter of
Panglai, and the souls that inhabit mist.
Breathing beckons the dead, and their
Memories.

To breath is to absorb their past, to
Become them.

We didn't notice the changes in dad,
Not at first,
Not until she sheered his wafro and moustache and sat behind his cedar desk and told us,
in such a calm calm voice,
that he would like a bowl of basboosa, or
Perhaps, perhaps, a plate of dry-roast Nikujaga

He screamed late at night,
In his new house where the nurses never slept,
Calling out for a wife who was never his wife
(Her name was Ulga) to
Bring him chicken-paprikash and a
Son who was not me.