

A Phone Call to my Father

I found your number while at work today.
Thought about calling you and how
the conversation would go. I suppose,
I would try to distract us both
from the silence echoing in the phone.
Each moment of ringing a constricting
zip tie around my throat. When you ask
who I am, I tell you I often see

what I think is you in my reflection.
I would want to tell you, I often dream
I'm drowning. How as I slip into rem,
I feel like I'm being pulled deeper
into an ocean. The salt water laps
against my eyes. I never reach the bottom.
You will ask what I do and I will say

I write poems. Will you listen as I tell you
that I've written so much about you, hoping
one day you would stumble across it,
hoping it would leave you breathless,
your chest heavy, hoping like a whirlpool
you would twist around the emptiness of me?

A Song for My Mother

I could sing a song about the Florida heat
and wind-whipped sand in the trailer
park where we stayed, or the church trip

where you taught me to pray, eyes half
shut, until you peeled me like a piece of gum
from the pews as we fled from the chapel. How

I set on your chest the sandal the paramedics
knocked off. They needed free hands to carry
the pill bottles that made you crave the thumping

crackle of an album ending. In the hospital ,
you kept trying to rip out your breathing tube.
All I could think about is how you told me,

Don't live just to exist. Don't be like me.

You've never asked me to sing for you, just
your father, who would have hated me
for the emptiness that slow burned into you.