

For Judy

“We are, I am, you are
by cowardice or courage
the one who finds our way
back to this scene . . .”

Adrienne Rich

You hid your half-woman body beneath
baggy jeans and Dad's shirt, staying
in the bathroom until you believed
I had fallen into night's roily currents.
Pale in your near nakedness, you were
the white shadow of Grandmother in the faint
light, and I nearly three years younger
and obscure beneath blankets, watched you
undress and slip into our bed. In the night
your slick, new legs crossed unconsciously
with mine.

At fifteen you left our room taking
Randy's after the army took him.
That September evening I was beside
you on the couch. When his lottery
number rode across the gray screen, Mom
rose for the Bible; Dad shyly put his arm
around Randy's shoulders. Our wet faces
bloomed back at each other from the T.V.'s
shiny surface.

At eighteen you married your first
lover, at nineteen I married mine.
It was a tangle of dreams. I imagined
me bearing the child, a delicate
daughter named after your most flamboyant
doll. By the time your son came
I had left the mountain, my child-
marriage collapsing.

Mom worries your divorce turned you
hard: "Just look at her eyes now —
and the corners of her mouth." Your
child-face still laughs from her dresser.
When I was born, Mom said I was yours
to keep you still. In our home movies
I saw you red-faced, howling, Randy cradling
my cocooned body high, above your small,
groping hands.

— Susan LeRoy