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Confessions

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CONFESSIONS

Those roses. I stole them in broad daylight
to prove I was mean. Other kids swore
truer when they saw my hands bleed.

My father was quiet
and sometimes unhappy. I wanted happy
and thought he was mean. So
did my mother. She sulked
and picked raspberries, pulled beets.
Dad mended our back fence
and burned an acre of trash. Summers
at dusk he'd call us home—*you kids*
and we were his. Mom
he called Josie and loved. She was pretty then
and baked pies, lemon meringue
and home-made apple
that made Dad think he dreamed
them in the war.

My mother grays, her face changing
into her mother's. The sorrow of farms
does not calm. I refuse my life
like cream and even dead
my father loves me.

I wept when others wept,
buried the dead animals under lilacs
when earwigs curled the leaves.
Mother said it would stink.

Once I lied and Mr. Wilson knew.
I played with his old plow
and didn't ask. Something
broke. *CarolAnn*, he said
like my father in my dreams.

I was ashamed
and so I hated him
in his snuff-stained shirt.

He never told, though I stole
his flowers and his wife cried.
Behind his back I called him
old, making fun of his suspenders,
the way his shoes flopped open
like slippers in wet grass. He still jawed
with Dad and tipped a white hat
to Mom Saturdays. Just a farmer
from Missouri, come west.
I couldn't know he came to die,
his poppies bursting orange every spring.

I lied and lied. The *Rialto*,
black and white movie,
a blond woman in her slip
screaming *you bastard*, slapping
the man dead. Stealing money
and telling my friends I prayed.
If being beautiful was love
I wanted to be mugged. *No*,
I said until they let me be.