

How My Mother Stays Warm At Night

She soaks in the hot tub
that occupies the majority of our small deck.
One of her hands heats the glass of cheap wine
while she concentrates on keeping the other hand hovering
just above the surface.
The moon is almost orange
and hangs low dripping light into the sky
as if her scene is a picture developing under
the lights and shadows of time. Floating alone
in the hot bubbles that peel away at her feet, tired soles
stretch towards the ends of the tub and her bloated stomach
surfaces like an island. She is alone, she smiles
up at the stars as if they are whispering *you are beautiful*.
She gives in to this small square of the universe
where breathing lapses
and the body lies unjudged
in a suit of spandex sinking
into black skies. Backyard shadows
of the deteriorating shed remind her of how wooden planks
wedged themselves between her marriage.
She doesn't know how love is supposed to age,
but her husband keeps the hot tub chemicals
in balance and the shed gets moldier each year.
She shuts her eyes so she won't have to look
at old skeleton trees slicing through
moon-washed memories.
She forgets what it's like to rest
a chubby toddler on her boney hip.
She drowns polaroid pictures in the tub:
waterlogging memories of when womanhood
looked flattering on her.