

WHAT MAKES ME THINK OF YOU

Dad, did you know there are more tigers in the state of Texas
than in all the world's wilderness combined?
I learn all kinds of things from talk radio and today I'm up on a ladder
priming that peeling south window you used to point out to me

hearing about Carol's addiction to video poker, how she broke open
her daughter's ceramic frog to get quarters, Roger's idea for a hit TV show,
what Debbie overheard when she picked up the phone extension,
and it's summer here.

I can see the tops of mimosa branches, fragile pink flowers
raining down all over the grass, that stuff you used to call *a mess*.
I never told you about the time I carved on my arm with a pair of scissors.
It was my first year of college. Do you know about being so twisted up

with longing, and loneliness? Remember how mad you used to get
at any gas station attendant who called you *Buddy*, or *Mac*? You would say,
in your voice that could scrape paint: *I'm not your buddy*.
Mom always said she would die first. I refused to believe her.

You used to tell a story about a fish who climbed
to the top of the Empire State building. I think there was a song, too.
You would ask me to read you stories, poems I wrote in my notebook.
I know you believe I stole

all of your money. Gun racks in the back of pick-up trucks,
certain hard-ass old men who walk bent over wearing baseball caps
make me wonder where you are. I should have put a tarp down
to catch what is falling, but it's too late now.

Kim says that even if we never visit the wilderness,
we need to know it's there.
I haven't forgotten you said we need a new roof. Next time
it will need to come down all the way to the studs.

Pam Crow