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Hog Creek Review

Buttermilk Heartbreak

This is what I know of buttermilk heartbreak:

My grandmother held the word "love" in her mouth until it curdled

Spitting it down her husband's throat like poison.

She taught me how to knead this bitter into the bread she baked, saying

"Cut it with a little sugar and all they'll remember is the sweet."

She'd serve us with dough still under her fingernails, pressing the apricot whiskey to her lips,
and all I could think about was how I've never found honey without getting stung.

I'd listen to my grandfather speak over the radio static

Cursing her for the sour in his veins while

flicking ash onto the table.

He tells my brother that women are more dangerous than vipers; sneakier and swifter too

and watches my tongue out of the corner of his eye

to see if it flashes silver.

I walk with three generations of bittersweet betrayal, stopping too long on street corners and
wondering

if mangled hearts can be passed down through families

If I was born this way or

somewhere along the line

I opened my hands

and took it.