

Sister

Your hair was short-cropped blonde,
pixie cut,
brown freckles on baby-white skin.
We stood at Grandma's dormer window
spitting plum pits off the roof.
Thin legs
matching red shorts
cheeks stuffed with ammunition:
laughing, mischievous girls.

Seven years old, and I knew
all about protecting you.
You were five, the baby;
I was big sister.
Bad things stayed away from you
when I was around.
Grown women now. But
your taste in men
raises big sister in me.
You throw away your Botticelli smile
on overgrown boys,
who wouldn't know a tender heart
from a can of beer.

If I could interfere,
I'd take your man-sized pain
and throw it,
like a plum pit, off the roof.
We'd laugh as it rolled across shingles;
we'd laugh,
pain buried in the cool grass.