

# Broken Engagements

Jennifer Liberts

Becky jabbed her elbow  
into my ribs, balancing  
pasta plates in line  
at Crate and Barrel

"You won't believe  
who's here," she whispered  
through sterling silver,  
crowds of ceramic

plates bath mats.  
Like bubbles blown off  
water, two years dissolve  
and he, holds fondue

bowls in the gourmet  
section— a gust of Drakkar  
all teeth, ocean eyes  
stolen roses and pet

names. Shards of words  
fell around me in fragments  
of china I'd thrown;  
doors slamming, lies pinned

like stained butterfly  
wings behind glass. Bodies  
of truth trapped in air—  
tight jars, specimens

for study over time.  
Cells split— pink tissue  
cleaved to me, beat blue  
blood through shared veins

while I retched french  
fries, ketchup— bloated  
slept through art history,  
health science, awakened

to secret underwater dreams—  
my brother holding my head  
as I breathlessly thrashed,  
fetal pigs in formaldehyde

blue drape, steel stirrups,  
IV needle, white walls; counting  
backwards from numb,  
to nothing. For weeks

I thought I felt it stir;  
small heart pulsing in me  
itching an amputated leg,  
running thirsty to mirage

Two years gone and he floats  
towards me— a soap bubble  
catching glints of color  
from artificial track lights

It could have been blond,  
with his cleft chin, hazel  
eyes like mine. Babbling  
by now— dada, baby

Gutted, his kiss  
a rusted hook in my cheek  
He wanes— a pinpoint  
reflected by a toaster oven.