

ANNIE BLAKE

Chinese Lanterns

You started up with your Prozac because I kept thinking about him—
the way he lifted me under my arms and swung me around
like the earth around the sun in the zodiac.

If his father knew, if he knew how far I drove every day just to wait for him.

I got lost in the city when I was young—the faces of people
were like Chinese lanterns that rise from the well
of the stairs. They are floating there just beneath the ceiling. You are the only
things in my house that glow.

When I showered I wondered if you would ever hit me,
the buildings rush past, the scenery stretching out like dough—
these are the codes which are sewn to my head,
these voices that talk like gods—they tell me to take the knife, the matches

and the sheets. You are the only person who wants to touch
me when I ask you to leave and I am too angry to feel sorry. I am holding on
to the pages of scenes where I watch you kissing the babies goodbye.
Our life has already become a black and white movie—like an old strip of negative.

This is what I remember the day we got flooded
at the beach. I had never felt a man because my dad is the girl who hides in the corner
of the woman. She wants to know why her daddy died
and her mama is crying without her

in the kitchen. My father has become the cold snow
on the beach, the dead leaves on the tree without the spring
you see through the spinning of the zoetrope. My mother's guilt is heavier
than her emptiness without me.