

Mother

She never dared cross
the threshold in her housecoat
to pluck the morning paper
from the dewy lawn.

She applied fresh lipstick
in the rearview mirror
before running into the A&P
for a quart of milk.

She weighed herself, lunched on
carrot sticks and cottage cheese,
said elastic waistbands were
the Devil's playground.

She quoted Emerson,
the Bible, and recited
Robert Frost with
a polished, porcelain voice.

The spring her flowerbeds grew feral
sans showy annuals,
and full of untamed ivy,
she was otherwise engaged.

Trapped in a squall where
fragments from her past
caught on barbed wire synapses,
flapping ragged before
flying into oblivion.

Her hair was a dandelion gone to seed.
Her housecoat stained.
Her frightened eyes met mine
without recognition.

I only knew I loved her to
the marrow of my bones
when I began to wish
that she were dead.

— Caroline Sposto