

Untitled

Alone in myself,
a young woman in a chicory blue dress,
waiting on the roof of her blue rambler,

waiting for a better view of the lake,
or the concrete as if faded water lilies.
And other girls, more beautiful, waiting near their cars,

the parking lot full of similar likenesses,
hips and Jesus sandals and apple beaded necklaces,
long hair and triangular scarves, muslin blouses,

embroidered jeans with red petals hemorrhaging
along the waist, waiting for the nurse to unlock the door.
Late afternoon, the clinic was open,

and no one dared talk about what they wanted,
most savage to be young and unwanted,
with a nurse wondering how many waited.

In the parking lot where boyfriends were not,
she imagined a possible forecast. Waiting
here was lonely enough

on the blue-winged roof of the car,
when a sole orange cone stood by her side,
when a delft blue shed flanked a corner,

and her body a sliver of lake water. My anxiety
hoped to be stifled, waiting
like an air rifle about to be shot,

And no one by my side,
to the door of unknowing.
Better to wait longer on the rambler roof

with a quilt and a sleeping bag in the trunk,
and one cousin in Nam's delta,
and another driving a truck near the DMZ.

A girlfriend's brother's name already

on a wall blackening, and children orphaned
heading for Guam, sounding like bull frogs.

Waiting here expecting
the nurse to open the door like a tripwire,
I couldn't admit to mindfulness.

The evening before, my aunts detailed
the results of a coat hanger inserted between the legs;
a hanger with its wired twist tied ends twisted;

and the one whose agony was laundry soap,
so fixed on the letting go,
products aptly named Tide, to create a blood tide;

Ivory or Borax or whatever cleanser was below
the kitchen sink; mother wouldn't know.
I listened to my aunts that evening

who warned about not being able to remove the wet smoke,
hurrying the bloody rose out of herself.
When the clinic's doors were opened,

I couldn't move.
I decided to wait here, not knowing,
to pretend I walked in. I waited

as a lake waits for the water to turn over,
a new temperature roils the change, waits
to be alone a little while longer,

I enter the lake, and feel the cold.

Janice Zerfas

Inspiration: *Untitled* by Soon Han