

MY MOTHER'S GARDEN

—after Nicole Callihan's poem "The End of the Pier"

I walked to the back patio with a spade.
In the crepe myrtle's shade
beside winter jasmine I dug a deep hole
and poured your ashes
into its center. Upon your remains
I settled a young Peace rose
like the one in your garden
whose thorns pricked
when I was a child. I back-filled
the emptiness—sand mixed
with crumbly compost harvested from our lives—
mulched with bark, watered with tears.
When you bloomed back to me
in heavy hues of gold, peach and rose,
I plucked you for the vase on my kitchen table,
inhaled your scent, no longer sorrow.

You came back again
at dusk as hovering hawkmoth
in pink-and-gray wings of angel cloth
resurrected from your pupa in the earth.
I reached for you, fluttered my fingers
over the whirring wind of your lingering.
And when you flew away,
again, I thought that you had left me,

but then you became rain. I raised my arms,
opened my mouth to drink you,
allowed you to soak into my body.
You evaporated with me
into the silver and gold cumulus clouds
boiling over the Sandias,
then dropped me back to earth,
distilled in raindrops.

In the end, you became earth as well.

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