

I.

I finally let you be my dad again.

You were bigger, Dad

I was small and afraid.

You were supposed to be someone I could look up to.

The time you pulled Skyla out of

the river before the current swept her away.

You didn't like dogs, but you

knew Grandma would be heart broken. ,

I let it all go_____

and I let you in.

Now I can finally enjoy the river.

~~~~~  
~~~~~  
~~~~~

Every time my paddle hits

the water, I pull pieces

of myself back together.

## II.

When I wasn't checking my spit  
valve, my arms were occupied with pulling  
myself further along in a six  
lane pool.

~

Every stroke I tried  
not to breathe, I wanted to out-swim  
my situation.

~

Concentration on the concrete block

- either about winning

or simply

- drowning

out the constant hum

~

Legs smack  
the water and we're off  
and I have received  
today's therapy but  
also bypassed another year.

## **When the first snowflake hits**

my nose,

I know the summer fun of

- Kayaking the Lower Youghiogeny River
- Fishing below the Ohiopyle falls
- Cannonballs into the swimming hole

are put to rest until next season.

I now confide in the nook between my bed and the wall.

Small enough for a child of ten,

who shares her most inner thoughts with a stuffed dog.

~

Waiting to escape to my Narnia in the woods of the Laurel Highlands Mountains.

~

-waiting for the smell of dryer sheets and pancakes on the warm green aprons

-waiting for the murky green pools hiding tadpoles

-waiting to hide from the passing time with walks through Ferncliffe

-waiting to trade responsibility for popping jewel weed late in the bustle of the afternoon

-waiting to drown out everything serious with scream of the milkshake machine

Pretending I never grew up,

while putting on my green apron, my shift starts at 2.

### **III.**

I put on my green apron,

I put on a new face.

“You don’t have to answer those questions”, My grandmother said “Just take the orders”.

For a quaint town, hardly anyone knew  
or maybe they did.

I didn’t care, I pretended

I didn’t know either.

“Order up, Sarah!”



## **My mother the kayaker**

“If you can’t tote it” She said “You can’t boat it”.

When I dreamed, of putting  
a giant piece of Tupperware to the river water.

~

I wanted to know how it felt,  
to catch a set of ripples and surf them.

I wanted to know how it felt to catch my  
hipsnap,

instead of flipping and swimming.

I wanted to know how it felt to be strong.

Hiding in the nook by the bed where the light  
barely reaches, will no longer suffice.

~

I must bear the weight that hits  
my shoulder as I carry table five’s  
afternoon meal of cheeseburgers

and crinkle cut fries (that probably could have been left in the fryer longer).

## **Foreshadow love or something more?**

The cool concrete felt good as I laid back to look up

at the stars, while he talked about his day.

The slightly damp towel under

my head acting as a pillow.

“What about you? Give me a little background.”  
He said.

“It’s not my most favorite thing to talk about.”

“I understand but it could help whatever it is you are dealing with.”

I laid it on him.

Leaving no gruesome detail unspoken.

I never spoke anything nice about my dad.

I felt like I didn’t have anything nice to say, until...

“But he is your father.”

My mind went blank.

~

I didn't pull out the devil I was trying to reach.

~

I had no response.

I couldn't hate him.

It was like the hate was knocked out of me.

Making room for something that was gone for a long time: Forgiveness.

## **I don't want what happened my mother, to happen to me.**

I love the relationship I have with my kayak.

The way it holds my hips and protects my legs.

I get afraid when

I flip, will I be able to get

out or will I be found among the other dead carcasses once lost.

I feel this way about my future relationships,

when things get serious, will I be able

to be free or will it end of drowning and letting nature take over.

~

I refuse.

That will not be my legacy.