

Hafizah Geter

[paula]

paula says when the moon came out
of her it was like a whitney houston song.
achy and full of high tones. she traces my fingers
over the scar, asks do i want to be beautiful too.

paula sucks on fireballs all day, says she knew
the 90s would be like this. i watch as she twists
the corner of her t-shirt around her finger and threads it
through a hot pink clip, her stomach glowing like a street lamp.

paula calls me late at night, says that this is a dream.
i wake to find her in the floorboards,
her laugh opening the curtains. she smiles
and says, the day she was born she watched god

die in a fire. we spend the afternoon nailing flowers
to our mothers, paula leads me to water,
says we are the baptism. together
we watch as summer drains the sky.

i show her how night lifts the windows,
but she says, it's just her father's hands.
after too much, paula tells me that sadness is like a girl
in a striped shirt. i put this in my book of important things.