

Julia Bouwsma

## After the Wedding

Inside our father's head is a giant oven—heat that swells and shrivels. Inside we are all cracked. Our mothers watched us so closely we thought we were motherless. Our fathers read us into existence. My sister, my cousin, and me jumping on the hotel bed with bottles of beer in our hands. What a burden to be forced to tell this linearly. The oven is guarded by a troll and a unicorn. The unicorn stands on the left, the troll on the right. Which is to say that they made me. Which is to say cleft. It's true I broke down the door, but would I really have been sorry if his head had split. Pity is the cicada shell still clinging to the dogwood, a child's outstretched hand. Some days I'd rather talk about revenge. But instead we lie in the bed examining our limbs, reading one another's arms as maps. Saying what strange and wonderful beasts we are. We nuzzle like a pile of pups. I am finally the happiest one. Until you tell me to swallow the key.

