

Red

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It happened when we
were outside salting slugs,
drawing crooked
lines on the sidewalk for
hopscotch
 over slimy trails and
cracks that tripped people,
 making us laugh...

Paper, scissors
rock
 fist

jump harder
run faster
sing louder so
you can't hear
 her scream;

Everything else is Ilocano
but the scream.

It happened when we were playing in
the bubble bath
 drowning ourselves and
 coming up again to see
who could hold the longest breath
 without dying

You count to sixty
while I hold my breath
I count to seventy while
you hold yours...
 When do we stop counting?

When somebody urinates in the water.

We stay in the tub until
 we wrinkle, and
 laugh
because it's funny to be wrinkled
and not old...

We let the water out, we put
some more in,
 turn it on strong like a hydrant
so we can't hear
her scream

Everything else is Ilocano
but the scream.

It happened when we
were cutting paper dolls with
plastic scissors—the kind
that are safe—
so we pretended to cut
our wrists and stab
our legs with the round tips and
 cut our hair
 and our eyebrows
 and the hands off our dolls so they
 couldn't hold hands anymore;
then we cut off their paper heads, and they were no longer dolls...

Paper, scissors
rock
 fist

We crumpled their bodies and
tossed them downstairs
chasing paper
chasing ourselves

Noticing
at once
the sweet air
of her voice
hovering over the clatter of dishes,
weightless
on bubbles,
fleeing through an open window
because he wasn't there

It was a warm and
gentle day
that carried her song,
many petals after rain
clung to her tired, dark hair.
We came downstairs for warm milk and honey
a good book
a pause
a penny for her thoughts...
We fought
to sit on her lap
where only one of us
could fit now
because of her belly...
warm and round
and hard
beneath her heart.

Things fall apart.

The Man on the Moon

laughs at our fear,
watches us bury ourselves in blankets and plug our ears as
heavy feet pound the stair
and we hum with our fingers in our ears
'til we can't feel and hear
 the thud
of bone
and wood and
breath collapsing in from
 a heart
cradled by
 a fist,
red lights swirling
 upon mist
 in our eyes
 that leaves with the moon...

Press harder
hum louder—open
your mouth when you breathe;
Feel everything
inside your body
drowning into a dream

Everything else is gone
but the scream.

Funny how the dark
renders everything colorless...

I wondered if I saw her
blood in the dark
if it would still be
red.