

from Juked #7, Spring 2010

THE BOY

Breathing lilac pollen into his head,
it becomes gigantic with sugar.

And because the word *like*
is the queen of his language, I'll tell you
the boy looks like me, the lilac
spread its sexual canopy
like the first sky with no stars,
and without a star's
harsh recipe for dying in nova,
that last flower of itself.

Because I am telling this
with a kind of expert
nonchalance, I will tell you the lilac
wasn't hiding a dirty boy, exactly.

In a winter storm,
he pushes through all his mother's clothing.
The blackout candles on the dresser are erotic.

Past nylon stockings, past bras
that were yellowed, medieval,
he finds a pack of firecrackers —
Ladyfingers.

They're for taping to the legs
of grasshoppers, and to the blue metal
wings of those beetles
who chew thoughtfully all day

on wax leaves and the tender,
violet parts of his tree.

Then there's the story
about the other flower, the aurora,
that the boy slept under,
one September, while his parents
lowered their lawn chairs almost to the ground,
and drank beer, and gazed off
at the polar light buttoning, unbuttoning,

until that play of purple and green
was something completely ordinary again,
and hardly worth noticing
between the gossip about the physical
life of bodies in the bowling alley,
and news of the marquee that had fallen,
finally, into such ruin
that it welcomed even the smallest rock
for the light it let *in* –

the sky became less, even, than the plastic
swimming pool beside the house,
its dark shape of bait minnows moving
like a single brain.

I'll admit
the minnows look like me,
and so does the mother,
because she turned herself into a tree for love,
into a redundancy.

And because the better part of me is leaves,
and birds I don't know, I'm going to tell you
they had short, gray tails,
they moved the branches only a little,
and their wings made a noise
like blouses shedding, no, no,
above snow.