

A conversation with my son

to the left
toward the sun,

or maybe a gnat buzzing around my head.

He's so small,
he has to look up for every distraction,
my crown, the sky, it's all beyond his reach.

I wonder what he thinks
but I don't want to hear him talk.

This morning, a lie.

Last night, a lie.

The blogs say he's testing boundaries,
dishonesty is age-appropriate.

I get so consumed
by who I want him to be,
who he should be,
that I fail to notice who he is.

I forget what it was like.
I don't want to remember.

I tell him his actions have consequences.

He has the power to hurt people.

It's funny, a body so tiny
possessing something as abstract as power.

He's not mature enough to use it.
Still, he likes to play with weapons.

There are times when his love is a freshly washed blanket,
and others when he wields it like a machete.

His vocabulary is limited, laughably so,
yet his words cut deep.

The most effective insults tend to be the simplest.

I try not to hold his mistakes against him.

The body keeps the score.
So does the vigilant parent.

I can remember,
those moments of rejection,
a person for whom I've given up so much,
using grammatically incorrect sentences
to say none of it matters.

Pride

A bag of cherries on the counter,
freshly rinsed and glistening.
The eldest sticks his hand in the bowl.
I warn him.

Gnaw too hard, it can cause you pain.
Tart and sweet are synonyms.
Not even the easy comes easy.
Joy is laborious.

He complains about the shallow, cautious bites.
“Nothing good takes this much work.”
The bulbous pit doesn’t make the flesh any less enjoyable,
I want to say.
If only he knew.