**No Lemons, No Preserves**

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In 9th grade biology class

I learned the word preserved meant frogs

& with scissors I sliced skin, found stomach turned sac

lungs deflated, heart & liver in the center,

the rough slipperiness

of gestation, of evolution

of legs that leap, eyes that color night.

Later, I learned preserved meant

survival, salt on meat, jerked journeys

across swamps North to escape chains and cotton

across deserts West when land was dry then repossessed

but fingers bled.

Even later, I tasted preserved lemons

sweet sour salty sunshine

slimy, like the frog, but bright with flavor.

I long for preservation

for my mother’s mind

as it was: vivacious

waving to water, listening to shore.

But psychiatric drugs are not lemon water,

no slice of sunshine or rind that binds a thing whole.

Today decays into tomorrow into next year

a slow slipping

an endless sun setting

into fog.