**His Patience**

Katherine Szpekman

delicate as the skin on her forearms,

mapped with blue and red

highways, translucent threads,

at the end, when she

brittle with fear,

reckless in her confusion,

how would she go, how

would he go

on, without her,

in the kitchen, baking pies,

pretending not to smoke,

her cough in the next room,

once the knot at the bottom

of his rope swing,

now a wet rattle,

its fibers slippery eel,

poised to strike

and electrocute their prey,

heart stopping,

her body forms an indent

in the couch,

a fossil,

and my father,

worn down like the oldest pair

of running shoes

I ever owned,

measures the time

between her uneaten meals,

he is exploding

he knows it is coming

he is so tired

he can almost allow himself

to notice the blue Carolina sky,

and imagine letting her go,

taking a full, cool breath.