**I Left for the Coast on a Thursday**

Yoda Olinyk

It was like this — my breasts were sore, and my period was eight days late. It was like this — from the moment I found out about you, you felt like an invasion — the way cells multiply and divide, an embryo has metastasized in my lungs, and I can't breathe. It was like this — I knew from that very first moment we shared that it was all wrong. Wrong time. Wrong place. But most importantly — wrong mother. You belonged to someone else. Somewhere, some other source of longing covets you, while I swat you away with my army of, '*no no no'*s and '*this can't be happening'*s. It was like this — I cried all night on the phone with my best friend. The next day, I made my plans — saw myself in the reflection of every third woman I passed on the street. It was like this — I decided not to wait. Decided I didn't need the comforts of home. Decided I didn't need the man who loves me. It was like this — a moody cabin, alone, a few thousand kilometers from home. Check-in texts. Stale ginger ale. Slices of cheese pizza when I could stomach it. It was like this — the day before it was over, I went to church and then wandered a quaint little town, hand on my belly, and let myself really know you for just one day. It was like this — I know a six-week pebble doesn't have arms or legs; doesn't kick. But I swear I felt you kick. It was like this — praying for mercy on red sand beach, I listened. I let you tell me, *"It's okay. There is nothing to forgive."* You knew I was the wrong mother too. It was like this — I left for the coast on a Thursday and came home three weeks later, a mother. It was like this — I've never called myself a mother until just now, but if I wasn't a mother that day on the beach, what was I? It was like this — I was happy before you, and I'll be happy again. But I also know grief because I know mother. It was like this — you were here, and now you're gone.