

## CROSS LAKE

---

*Melissa Brown*

My grandmother pulls a new nightgown  
over my head, sends me out into the woods  
to find my mother. It is early dusk.  
When I step into the clearing  
my mother gasps in mock surprise  
and runs to fold me in her arms.  
I see my sisters now, sitting  
in a row on the white benchswing.  
My grandmother wants her daughter  
to believe we came into the world  
this way—dressed and small enough  
to walk unnoticed between the trees.  
Snip goes the price tag, our hair  
in braids and flowers, our thin arms  
floating toward the beach.