

Mother

1.

Night drags her blanket of blackness
from bedroom to couch then back

again to bed, her frail head, slightly
shaking. She will not step outdoors.

Small squares of green gingham
puddle at her feet, sketch of quilt

for my son but the sliver of needle
is hard to grip. The squares slip

through the floor and trigger
a green flood. My sister and I slosh

through the boggy basement, wring
out water from murky piles of wet

dreams. We know better than to ask
why they are heaped here. She blackens

her hair. The dark dye drains to her lips
and seeps into the lines around her mouth.

“If only I could sleep,” she says
so my sister and I flatten

into a set of cotton sheets to sooth her,
tuck ourselves around her, fold her into sleep.

The mattress buckles and craters:
broken metal springs won’t spring again.

Only her bed imagines—
floating on waves of moonlit water.

2.

We are on the hint of a shoreline
an unutterable island. We are a part

of her past rippling outward
from her bedroom as a crimson

tide. Our presence is an eddy
to her: leaving, coming, leaving.

We are underwater seaweed flicking
against her skin. Our voices crash

over her, plumes of sounds.

There is no water here in her room
yet she cannot utterly surface.

She is wandering further into herself,
sinking to where her other

self propels then slows darkly,
as she slips among unseen rocks.