

LAURIE KRUK

Reliquary

The word pops out of my mouth,
and I tongue it again, gratefully
as I shake out the baggie, gently
and drop into my jewelry box,
her latest pale white nugget, pillow-planted.
Five years collecting calcium and hope,
grown in the dark,
traded in for loonies or twoonies now,
to bite off dreams with price tags at the mall.

Still I sugar their sleep
with dreams kept beneath my pillow,
wishes for Popularity, Beauty and Success
 yet not too soon, or too much
 for some days
I am also the Evil Queen
biting the green apple of envy, sealing
up the glass coffin
in a double burial: my youth, their future.

I drop the lid, with a thud.

But all night something shines
like coins slipped under cotton,
a shimmer on the ceiling

while the real girl, across the hall,
like her older sister,
slays dragons in her sleep.

Tomorrow, she will grin with a gap,
a jingle in her jeans.

But tonight, in sleep
I am pushing her out again,
lavender-grey, perfect, whole:

thus believers maintain the illusion of
sainted lives, Madonna with Child:

our legends of ourselves