AN ANNUAL DELIVERY OF COCONUT CAKE

My father takes out his knives —
polishes one with spit, says he’s waiting
for the messenger. He always hated coconut.
Noontime kitchen full of the sound
of belt and hock and wet black bar.

My mother hovers in on a headache
of chemicals, dyed and set and
jordan almond coloured and already
napping through her pills, her bedroom
lock clicks like a trigger.

And my father yal-lows a neighbour
loudly through the screen door
before the commotion begins:
Something cracks in the yard:
a child’s ankle, crushed beneath
the body beneath the Chinaberry.

And my mother hisses awake in the twilight,
estles two fingers against her temples,
and my father yells to the howler
boy don’t make me put my knife down.
And then the mailman arrives.

Our forks scrape the tin foil
of my parent’s nerves as we make
short and silent work of the coconut cake:
white sugar thrust down in glottal stops,
in the ten minutes it will take before
their delicate sensibilities unhinge and
collide over the remains of that discus,
feathery-sweet carcass flung out for the birds.