

The First Time She's Pulled Over

She had never had seizures,
was never before made to quake full-body
by flashing lights.

Fireworks, how they lit the sky scattered & fractured
then swallowed itself back up—
never caused more than gleeful gooseflesh.

Mad laughter on tippy toes
stubbing the light switch
manic, trying to incite fear;
always the one with the threat
sugaring her tongue.

Zee who threatened
the phone call at every betrayal,
every *unlawful* heavied hand,
and stolen snack.

Flickering blue lights, now the ants,
insignificant until they are all over you;
just a small thing in the memory
til it traps you.

“They’re going to get you!”
salivating sister of thine.
Seatbelt tightening as if
there was anywhere to flee.

“What’d you do?” —mom asks.
But, something’s deflated your tongue,
made it heavy in your mouth,
needing air. The adults are letting the windows down,
but who will take that as invitation in.

How do you not start to leak at the edges
when the walls are closing in? Idiots!
a car full grinning as you
sit stiff, removed.

What makes a hero a hero?
How is the bad guy bad and who is he?
Which one will reach their hands
into the car looking to pull a truth
you don’t remember out?

Your family is laughing with
closed eyes; big sister’s hand clutching
her gut, eyes watering:
both like and unlike yours.

Your neck kissing close the leather of your seat
the officer’s approach imminent; you know
he won’t be smiling: you’re guilty of a lot
more than you can remember
yet evidenced by witnesses, family,
who won’t save you for laughing’s sake—
the kind of laughter
that echoes in its’ ache.