

Plumeria

Leaves and flowers blanket the ground:
Venous dried corpses, varying in decay—
Crunchy as mummies or pliable as leather,
Crispy Chex at the top or soggy with milk—
Clog the lawnmower.

As I kick compost away with size six Reeboks,
Roaches swarm the lawn, scurrying for cover.
Glistening black and brown scavengers
Rattle the remaining foliage
And raise the hair on my pale legs.

The plumeria that hides them seems ready for play:
Soft papery bark forms soft knots
On the low-forked gnarled trunk.
But the knots burst with poison sap,
Milky sweet sap that eats the eyes of children.

I let the summer sun bake my thoughts
Into fantasies of
The gas can on the porch,
The stolen box of wooden matches in my pocket,
The ample kindling strewn about the lawn,
And assuaging the gutless fears of
Hairy pinpricks into my calves.

My grandfather always said:
Firebugs wet the bed.

To strike a match and light the pyre
And giddily watch as roaches and sap run—
Their guts sizzle, limbs curl,
Bubbled, curdled spurts and vapors—
Would ignite the lawnmower at my feet,
And leave only the scorched remnants
Of an unremitting ten-year-old.