Cupid’s Bow

Standing under the window of the old house, I watched you try to play your mother’s songs. You, in a chair, bent and bowing, filling the square rest of the stairs we’d climbed as barefoot ribboned girls, and trampled down chasing apples, bumping with time’s velocity. We thought we loved the taste of the bruise on newly minted teeth- the taste of the teeter on the scalloped edge of seven.

Doll babies, we pebble-nuzzled, dry, wide, awake and breathing the smell of sewing and feather down stretching bedtime stories, rimmed in gold, your blind mother’s cello sobbing someplace down the hall- a blot of darkness in the blue of our bliss.

Under, standing, composed in decorations of light and shade, I pressed my palm and then my cheek to the glass, intimate remembering, eyes closed, and I felt the vibrant truth of sound, our sopping sunset little girl kisses, red as licked candies borrowed from cupboards, borrowed, like the morning she tied up our wrists, yours and mine with packaging string and promised no one could untie her knots:

you and I were one child,

an instrument of summer sound.

We played with two hearts: beating out our little love with hapless fists, the blank heft of beanbag dolls, and downy golden thighs- kissing and forgetting apples on stairs.

I felt it in my cheek, buzzed it on my lower lip as the glass lent me the beloved spread of your badly practiced alchemy- the insect bend of your arm, testing my features, your mother’s fleeting fingers tasting, trying strings, the cotton webs of breath-tight strings that bind you now to stair spindles and amber, widowed cellos.

I watch you and remember when your hair was longer, lighter- feel and trace the whir of your work on my lip,
the glass spinning silence of the bones of your wrist
rubbing mine as we ran until we thought they’d merged
like strings to stairs in a house bereft of scissors and sight.

I am widowed, window-watching
   my older you. Tenderness seeping, lashes taut,
   lips humming full with the
crying quiver
   of your cupid’s bow.

_by Aimee Parkhurst ’06_