

## For the Freckle in Her Eye



Rachel Leonard

*You said, When I'm dead, do my hair like Madonna.  
Dress me for Bonnaroo. Sew a smile across my face and float  
flowers in my hair. Prop me upright in a photo booth.  
Fake mustaches, top hats, feather boas. Go all the way.  
Put a bounce house in the backyard, sneak the kids champagne.  
If I die tomorrow or in one hundred years, same rules.*

Last fall I read a poem out loud to you and a room of strangers.  
It was about the day we Nair-ed the hair off our vaginas together. You  
didn't even turn red—but you cried during the line about the old yellow house;  
I know it reminded you of your dad.

I hadn't seen your face so soaked since the night that yellow house turned  
into a war zone and we pitched a tent on the lawn. We fell asleep hand-in-hand  
singing that Postal Service song: *I am thinking it's a sign that the freckles  
in our eyes are mirror images and when we kiss they're perfectly aligned.*

(Although we have never kissed except for one Halloween,  
and what could be real between a mere mermaid and an elf queen?)

*For the Freckle in Her Eye*

For your eighteenth birthday I bought you a fifth,  
a lighter, cigarettes, and lotto tix. They were the only  
wrapped gifts you got that year. So quickly we became  
family: you, me, the kitchen table, and our coffee machine.

In December we made stockings with our names at the top but our home  
had no hearth to hang them above. On the coldest mornings  
I'd squint over coffee cups and soggy waffles, trying to spot that freckle in your  
eye.

But we no longer aligned. So you packed yourself up in a box  
like a coffin and I mourned the U-Haul that drove you away.

In January I watched the Christmas tree in our living room die  
and I remembered one hundred years ago, telling you that when I wither  
I want to be rolled into a ball of good soil. I said, *I want to grow a tree.*

*I'll braid your branches, you had told me earnestly.*