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Aunt Karen Has Been

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AUNT KAREN HAS BEEN

Aunt Karen has been
working on a bottle of wine
since noon.
It is three, she
slurs her words
she loves me
a familiar speech.
And then like a switch
she's yelling
about her mother,
a disappointment,
an absent figure,
after the age of fifteen
Aunt Karen's eyes are sad
and green
But her hair is still rich and black
with touches of gray
Aunt Karen is thinner than I am
and is dramatic and defensive
when I mention it.
Aunt Karen will beat you at Jeopardy
and is an easy crier.
Once she made me pancakes
soaked in her salty tears.
But I ate them anyway
because she is a wonderful cook,
although she's been a waitress for twenty-five years
Aunt Karen is the only sister never married
and childless.
When I was seven I waited for someone to tell me
I am actually hers
and that is why we look alike.
When Aunt Karen curses
it sounds earned.
When Aunt Karen laughs
it sounds like magic
and spreads like fire.

*Kristi Britz
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