

Exodus

Shelby Tisdale

Honorable Mention—Poetry Competition

Woman:

the title is only luggage I carry
when I am two steps
from the Mississippi border.
I bake my mother's accent into cornbread
and chew so no one will know who I am
until crumbs slip from the corners of my lips.

My grandmother can play the piano by ear.
She wanted to write poems like her father
but never did, so when I write stories about her tall,
bleached hair and how when you look into her eyes
you can see her hope for deliverance, she applauds.
When you look into her eyes, she is proud
and sad and will tell you stories about dead cousins
and jumping from the backs of pickup trucks
in Pelahatchie.

My mother laughs when I call myself woman
as if womanhood is something you must earn
by signing your dreams into a will for the son or daughter
you promise you will bear. I tell my mother
that if I earn a doctorate and marry, I will hyphenate
my last name, and she prays that I don't forget
where I come from.

When you are a woman in the South,
you are only who you come from,
where you come from.
You play in the marching band at the school
your mother went to and live in the house
where she grew up.
You say you will marry a tall man with broad shoulders
who will break his back to feed as many children
as you can have and all the unborn children
you will grieve.

I am two steps from crossing the Red Sea,
and I don't plan to forget Egypt,
but how many women will sink
before the waters part?



Food for Thought

Shelby Tisdale

First Place—Drawing

Graphite pencil



Bike in Quarantine

Sophia Toner

Second Place—Drawing

Pencil and paper