

Two Poems

by Monic Ductan

Photograph: Grandma's Kitchen, 1939

A chicken's white wing, barely visible
Through the kitchen window. Granddaddy,
Out there by the chopping block, wringing
A chicken's necklace of white feathers.
In the kitchen, everything glows in sepia—
The bridges of noses, pomaded hair.
My toddler aunt and uncle lean in
As she tastes from his spoon. Grandma,
Head kerchiefed, looks into the camera,
Asking. No, begging, Take me out of here.
She does not notice the pot bubbling over,
Liquid wetting the eye of the range.
Her belly round with what could only be
My mama. Imagine my fingers, reaching
To touch the belly, to feel Mama's limbs
Thrash or kick through the womb,
The skin, through the years, to me.

When My Mama's People Ask Me to Come Home

They say, Don't you miss us?
I miss the smell of mud-bottomed creeks
Azalea festivals with bright-eyed girls
Waving from paper floats.
I miss the sound of ice shifting
As I pull a cold one from a plastic cooler.
Old Miss Bunyan, giving her greeting,
Back hunched, head peeking out
Like a turtle from its shell. Yellow leaves fall
As she tells me about my great-great
Grandma's ghost. Everyone wants to be a ghost,
To hover over our people, sprinkling
A year's worth of wishing-well wishes,
To haunt two acres of tall grass
With dreams of brick houses, riding
Under the stars, cool wind on chafed shoulders.

