

From My Tangerine Seat

I can always tell the difference
between the new-comers
and the regulars—
the ones for whom the sterile citrus smell,
the whimsical, neon seats,
and the blankness of waiting
are nostalgic, comfortable.
I don't just mean the ones whose kids are in casts
or wheelchairs, or braces, or tanks or tubes.
I can tell.
Their cheeks don't hang quite as low.
Their knees don't skitter
at the animated jabber twittering from the television,
or the scrape of colored beads
sliding across twisted metal tracks
by the gummy fingers of someone else's sick kid.
Their eyebrows and mouths
aren't pulled as taut in the corners
as they stroke the pigtails
or rub the little backs in their laps.
The ghost of diagnosis isn't shadowing their shoulders
or breathing stale air on the backs of their necks.
I can see it,
even if the ailment is invisible and silent,
buried in the gut or swimming in the blood.
I wonder and wonder if they wonder about me,
about my height and about the keys I'm clutching,
neither parent nor child,
nor tanks nor tubes
to validate my presence—
perhaps nothing but the spark in the chubby phlebotomist's eyes
as we exchange our usual, muted greeting.
Oh,
I imagine them nodding to themselves
as I follow her to the second door on the left
and enter the sticker encrusted walls,
my chin lifted.
Now they can tell.
In that moment of vindication,
my blood heats up my face, neck, and chest,
before it streams,
a robust wine,
through the mouth of the delicate dragonfly
nestled in my elbow crease

Lesbian Step-Sister

I could hardly contain my excitement
when I first saw you so tall in your green dress
at our parents' wedding!
Did you know that when I told my siblings
we were getting a lesbian step-sister
we fist-pumped?
We did! We high-fived!
A Modern Family, fancy that!
Your girlfriend even had a prosthetic arm!
Pretty neat I thought!
And your green dress
oh wow, my mom's color was blue!
Everyone wore blue
the china was blue
the walls were blue
the lake outside the glass door was blue
but you were green!
It looks nice in the pictures though
I mean we all wore different shades—
how different is green from blue anyway?
Not that different!
My mom didn't mind!—
well I guess she did mind
when Michelle and I invited
your one-armed girlfriend to join
a family picture or two
especially since you're broken up now—
but the non-blue dress was fine!
My mom
her eyes are blue you see
and her life has been blue.
You should have seen her
swimming in endless blue
with all of us riding on her back
and my dad
my dad forgot how
and my mom had to swim with him,
a big sleepy albatross around her neck
lolling in the deep, deep blue.
She just swam for years
and we didn't even get that wet
isn't that amazing?
I made her a bouquet of blue hyacinths.
Your dad bought her a topaz ring,
a big, clear turquoise stone.