

## We Come From

When I turned 17, my mother kissed each of my fingers,  
draped her mother's gold star around my neck,  
whispered *baruch hashem*.

When I bite my tears at the grocery store,  
I am grasping at the you that I want to stay, I want to say—  
instead, we sit in your golden Subaru and open that bag of secret tortilla chips.

We come from Grandpa Carl,  
who can't be over five foot, missing that one front tooth,  
his little kippah, and all those glasses of wine,  
watching Garfield in his stuffy New Jersey home,  
his dead wife's star burning around my neck,  
that grandmother with my old name,  
some call it dead.

She died in the Holocaust,  
so I don't know,  
but I think I come from her:  
that wind through my body at my first synagogue.

I come from prayer, purple butterfly bush, two dead cats,  
from crawling into my parent's bed  
until I was too big to crawl into my parent's bed,  
but doing it anyway.

How can I let her go when she comes in from the cold,  
hands red and tears stinging?  
When I rub her warm?  
And tell me, will I ever float upwards face down,  
or be sprinkled in somebody's river?  
Will she?

Oh mother, an aching too tender to touch,  
tell me where we come from!

we a coming continuous we an ever tumbling coming from a right now we waking up to say

*hineinu hineinu hineinu*