

## **AA Meeting in Baton Rouge, Louisiana**

My first AA meeting in Baton Rouge, Louisiana I sat, eyes mostly on the floor. My shame was closing my throat and moistening my palms and soles with sweat. The stories weren't familiar to me. One man lost custody of his daughters, another went to jail, and a third had a life altering injury. One woman put a young girl in a hospital, another gave her son fetal alcohol syndrome, and a third was stuck with false teeth. My shame deepened. Not only was my drinking controlling me, but my bottom was so shallow. I almost lost a place to live. My roommate had given me the choice between homelessness and AA, and here I was. I had to be at the mercy of my philosophy professor, begging him to take my paper late, which he had done because I had turned everything else in on time. I had bitten a classmate on the leg when she was dancing on a table, though I was pretty sure I hadn't broken skin. There were all the sexual assaults, but at the time I blamed myself rather than the rapists or the booze. These folks in this humid room outfitted like a church youth group room from the early 90s had lost everything, and they were talking like even 24 hours of sobriety was a cure for all that ailed them.

## **Another Physical**

I had to get my third physical for this adoption. Our second update for this home study cycle. We had already been through psychological assessments, education, and social worker interviews. The doctor came into the room with pleasantries and questions. He was clearly asking to see if I was anxious or depressed. After two years of waiting, and a failed match, I couldn't help but feel a bit of all of that. Every time the doctor asked another, "Do you feel defeated?" kinds of questions, I said, "no," even though the answer to every single one of those questions was yes.

## Control

My therapist says it's  
control that makes me anxious  
or rather the lack thereof

When I want to shout out contradictions  
to what others perceive of me

When I want to introduce myself  
with far too much backstory

When I want to be the one  
who puts away the dishes  
and the groceries  
and the laundry

When I want to take  
everything out of the closet  
to reorganize

When I write myself  
as the hero  
of all the stories in my head  
and on paper

I want to control

She says  
some of my coping is healthy  
and some isn't

So I made an inventory  
a list  
of all I can control  
and all I can't

We'll see how long  
until I try to  
conflate both columns

## **Mirror, Mirror Lies to Me**

Mirror, mirror on that wall used to show me something beautiful  
Size double zero  
Thigh gap  
Michelle Obama arms  
A Kerri Strug tush  
No discernable waistline, but an almost concave, flat stomach

Mirror, mirror on that wall used to show me  
Porcelain complexion like Kiera Knightly  
A sharp jawline  
Bright, awake eyes  
A full hairline  
And no crows' feet

Mirror, mirror now lies to me  
She shows me a rounded stomach  
Though I haven't given birth  
Arms thicker with fat than muscle  
Thighs that stick together unless purposefully parted  
A softening, doubling chin  
A thinning hairline  
Lines around eyes and mouth

Mirror, mirror I had so many plans for that girl  
That beautiful, fit, young girl  
I never thought of what to do with this thicker, older version

## **Not Quite Right**

Her nails were too long and her hair was too short.  
Her belly was too empty and her mind was too full.  
Her eyes were too closed and her ears were too open.  
Her house was too bright and her backyard was too dark.  
Her rules were too firm and her perspective was too flexible.  
Her room was too neat and her kids were too messy.  
Her tea was too hot and her bath was too cold.  
Her shoes were too tight and her jacket was too loose.

She spent most days wishing for just right.