

# LISTEN

**THEODORA  
ZIOLKOWSKI**

*—for Rose M. Upton*

I watched the reedy blue cords in your hand crease  
and release as an avalanche  
of noise crashed from your mouth, the glass baking dish

exploding to the floor—cinnamon and flour powdering  
your apron, the ruins of the dish  
glittering in your hand. Once in a while I see the pieces

falling hard to the floor like wedding rice, and then allow myself  
a memory, as if the fleeting sense of your  
body is all I have to go by. Kept from the sea, in a hotel

with walls papered in clover, you would insist you heard the water  
as you stared from a sleeper sofa  
covered in sand, squeezing the neck of your cane as I occupied

the space your blind eyes gazed into. Learning of your death was like  
sitting on a ship without any windows.

Last night, water flooded the room by the Atlantic where its current

used to murmur under the voices on your audio books.

I want to know if the egrets

still whisper in the trees, or if the dolls with their porcelain

hands and satin dresses still stand in the room of your attic,  
smiling in that perfect  
motionless way of theirs, hearing everything perfectly.