

# THE GIRL WITH THE BLACK CRAYON

**CONOR BRACKEN**

who stands at the edge of the playground,  
looking at the chipped brick  
of the factories pumping their gray exhaust,  
the wind-bent poplars  
and the small fishermen beyond them,  
mending their nets  
while they wait for the tide to come  
and lift the ice floes a bit more apart,

is my mother. She calls me  
on her new phone and tells me  
“I had a dream.  
I was telling you  
that having a kid is like watching  
a piece of your heart  
walk around outside you”

and I empathize. Through my ignorance  
I can see what she’s getting at,  
and I wonder what her mother thought  
while watching her color  
“perfectly inside the lines  
every duck and Jane and ball”

black and only black  
until everything was a silhouette  
she believed the world should throw.

Every weekday with the nuns then,  
Jesus agonizing above the windows  
through which starchy light  
sifted in like a powder.

Then recess, alone by the fence  
because the other kids  
didn't care "what a great word  
wimple is." And her ears!

Like white shells  
from an innocent ocean,  
and her hair like a net  
in which the great cod  
of the wind is caught.