

STARVING FOR AFFECTION

I stopped eating when I turned ten.
Mother said it was just a phase
and chided me when I hid peas
in clouds of mashed potato
that rained gravy down the plate.

Two weeks passed and she got worried.
Pushed slices of cake in front of me.
Pink jelly that wobbled when she cried
to see strands of hair falling out;
bones jutting from my face.

Desperate, she chewed strips of raw meat.
Handfuls of cherries that pinked her teeth.
She held my chin with shaking hand
and fed me with bird-like kisses.
I swallowed and gaped for more.

Sister watched from across the table
while I grew fat on mother's love.
Then she pushed her fingers
deep down her own throat.
No-one did anything when she gagged.