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Freshman 15 // White Wash // The High Place Phenomenon

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The Freshman 15

Skin stretched too thin

ripping at the seams, begins to fray
Encased in lard, O gluttonous sin

Barcode engraved next to belly button
says product is near its expiration, watch it decay
Skin stretched too thin

Oakwood-grain contrasts against cheerio-sand skin
Gelatinous stomach fat scored like clay
Encased in lard, O gluttonous sin

Jagged zig-zags, ragged pin
stripes go every which way

Skin stretched too thin

Puckered, inflamed ribbons
shorelines torment a beached castaway
Encased in lard, O gluttonous sin

Inner thighs a page of wavy symbols foreign
hips enthroned in withering bouquets
Skin stretched too thin
Encased in lard, O gluttonous sin

White Wash

After Sylvia Plath's "Face Lift"

I sneak in a bottle of skin-lightening oil from the drug store,
tucked behind my back, discarded box and directions
in the parking lot: I found my new night routine.
When I was four, a woman
stood behind me and my mom in line. She was shocked
by my mom's white hand holding my tan one. Told Six Flags security
that my mom snatched me from my real mother.
O my mother was sick.

Things didn't change. After swimming
pale as Snow White in my suit of sunblock,
dizzy from the stench of sunscreen,
I dry off under an umbrella while my sister
basks in the sun. She makes me feel something shameful
peeks out from my Banana Boat cloak. At a quarter past two
she flips onto her belly like a pig on a spit...
She doesn't know a thing.

For five months I apply whitening treatments in secret,
pinch rubber bulb, drip serum onto skin, its excess stains sheets and pillow.
Even my peers think I'm adopted.
Complexion doesn't reflect my roots, chemical peels do a better job of that.
When I shower, skin cracks. I grow sensitive. I'm fourteen,
flaky and in immense pain in my childhood bathroom, my cheeks

screaming as I slather more whitener on them;
I hadn't self-love yet.

Now (six years later) she's done for, the judgmental bully
I heard shouting, day and night, in my ear—
Family outcast, tried so hard to lighten me that she erased herself.
She's trapped in my teenage diaries.
Let her collect dust, or catch fire in a blaze,
writhing and howling as flames eat her paper-skin.
To my younger self, I wish to cradle you in my arms,
brown and beautiful as can be.

The High Place Phenomenon

Rushing water carries logs down the creek. I force myself
not to shout out as the reservoir soaks up my reflection.
Blushed pink cheeks coated in misty air, I
never want to be pummeled,
crushed by the insurmountable weight of the falls.
Nowhere else to go, it releases a saturated
gush of waste and debris. I
don't speak, just picture myself tumbling in the mix.
Hush, hear a log's soft whistles and cries.
 No one will notice her absence amongst the
 brush; many branches take her place.
 She's gone.