

THE BLUE NOTEBOOK

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Research

Seventh grade and once a week the bus for gifted students took us from junior high to junior college.

Seventh grade and I: ran away from home, lost two flutes and a jacket, was nicknamed Spacy Staci.

At the library at Miami Dade Community College I picked up a thick book about prescription drugs.

Seventh grade and amber-bottled pills stolen from my mother's medicine cabinet. Twenty odd

RORER 714 tablets, white and scored down the middle—Quaaludes, the guide assured me.

The red ones I couldn't find in page after page of colored photos of pill. Those, I called *Insurance*.

The Attempt

Red pill.

White pill.

Orange juice.

White pill.

Handful of white.

Handful of red.
Chalk taste.
Choke.
Orange juice.
Urge to puke.
You have to be quiet for this to work.
Pills gone.
Lights out.

The Blue Notebook

I can't explain why I hid the folder in my closet like stolen goods, like the makeup I stole from drug stores or the colored paper clips I ripped off from the campus bookstore and wore as earrings, can't explain why I pressed the reasons for killing myself between pages of loose-leaf like flowers, like mementos of a trip, like ticket stubs from a movie. In the emergency room that morning, a curtain separating us from the doctors and nurses, I tell my father the notebook's shoved under a shoe box on the shelf above the bin he built for my toys. When I get home it's gone.

The Plum

Here's what I remember:
just home from the hospital
the deep sigh of my body
burrowing into the sofa.

Holding the plum
my mother handed me
still wet from the sink.

Watching mom and dad fight.
Their mouths moving.
That first bite. The taste.
So unexpected.

At J's 13th Birthday Party

I smuggle in a secret bigger than a birthday gift
covered in blue cardstock and tied with rope

thick as a wrist. Watch as the presents
are unwrapped. Listen as all the girls,

giddy and high on cake and ice cream, tease
each other about who has a crush on who.

Lift my mouth into a smile that says,
Yes, I'm having fun. See. Like a normal girl.

Just like you.

*After Stopping to Pick Up J's Birthday Present, My Father and I
Take a Walk at Greynolds Park*

We were blanketed in sweat. Walked past the mangroves and live oaks covered with Spanish moss, the canopy full of air plants cupping their ears to listen to our words or the call of bird song. I can't remember what you said. Maybe you asked me why I tried and maybe I told you some story explaining it away. Maybe I stayed silent as the gumbo-limbo, with its peeling, sunburnt skin, a strangler fig closing tighter and tighter around its trunk.