

Menarche

BY MELINA PAPADOPOULOS



Image: "Caught in the Days Unraveling" by Chelsea Welsh. "Menarche" was written by Melina Papadopoulos for *Rattle's* Ekphrastic Challenge, December 2016, and selected by Welsh as the Artist's Choice winner.

My fish-eyed brush caught my hair
in a fistful of undoing. I'd become
somebody else's home. The things I was made of:
Broken glass, teaspoons, sewing needles retrieved
from abandoned quilts, their unhealed cross-stitches.

Told the first thing to change about me would be
my midday shadow when I wore my hair down.
Next, my handwriting: from blotched ink like inner-thigh bruises
to bows-and-ribbons cursive, flirty but still flimsy where the s's stammer.

I never wrote love poems then, only letters broken into deaf stanzas.
There was one to the night. I kissed craters and stars into white pages.
There was one to the day. I cupped in my palms the pieces of itself
The sun wished to hide: its non-gilded stride into December,
its dimpled summer shadows dark and red among oak trees.

Today, I am a stranger's home. In a room with nothing to its name but dust,
I contort my body into the floor's harsh woodwork. Light works its way around me.
Surrounding me instead, my hair, a dark and useless wingspan.
I don't have a voice, but I have birdsong: I am a stranger's home. I am my own.

