A Letter to My Sister

by Janet I. Buck

She had a new bottle of Nina Ricci
sitting in the dresser drawer.
After she died, you took it home;
five years later it reappeared
as my birthday gift.
I shrank from the scent --
asafetida or ether
or something behind our attic walls --
I could not think of words.

Her final days came back
in teardrops on a thank you note.
I should have called you
on this sin -- assuming her death
were a downhill path,
a wound that would close,
tissue content to be sand.
It takes longer than years
for sadness to smell of a rose.

You were the traitor to grief
and I am the one still standing
atop the Tarpeian rock.
Wind and dust whirl
around the binding ropes
and I could fall just thinking hard.
When will you learn
that days she left behind
are blue with a half-painted sky.

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