

Melisa Cahnmann-Taylor

DES PLAINES, ILLINOIS 1978

My mother answered the phone with fog in her voice,
illness a cloak against overdue books and bills.
For days, thermometer pressed to bed lamp,
I kept myself burning. Loved with saltines
and wet washrags.
They say a woman forgets labor
once the baby's born, but Mother said
she never forgot, though her memory was bad.
She missed appointments with dentists, the counselor,
but she remembered to stop for soup, pour
canned broth into a bowl. She taught me
ice packs and ginger ale,
to wear slippers in the basement and feel my way
around rusty nails.
Sour damp sickness.
Like a rotten pear suffering openly
in a fruit bowl by the sill.

Melisa Cahnmann-Taylor's poems have appeared in *APR*, *Quarterly West*, *Puerto del Sol*, *Bellevue Literary Review*, and *Barrow Street*.

Cahnmann-Taylor, M. (2008). Des Plaines, Illinois 1978. *Alaska Quarterly Review*, 25(3,4), p. 215.