Emily Moore

Home Remedy

At night, in dorms, we cracked each other's backs.
I lay face down, my breasts flat to the rug
that reeked of dust and cleaning fluid, the room
thickened with tapestries and hair-dye stains,
uncapped pens and broken screens, dirty piles
of socks and jeans and thrift-shop flannel shirts.
Brooke sat on my hips, one knee on each side,
her palms stacked in a wedge, an open prayer,
and counted *Ready one two three* then pushed
her hands up hard into my spine, the crack
the sound a roommate's necklace makes
when accidentally dropped behind a desk.

By college Nick was using heroin
but Leigh still let him snap her neck. Out West,
Alina and her friends huffed paper bags
in bathrooms where they made themselves black out.
Sometimes Brooke and I stood up. I crossed
my arms in front of me, my fingertips
gripping my shoulders while she stood behind
cupping my rashy elbows with her palms,
then counted down and lifted hard until
our backs arched and my feet came off the floor.

What I Miss

The bathtub in Lane's tenement was shuttered in,
or would have been if somebody
had cared to close the doors. To be alone,
I pulled the plastic curtain shut
splashing its leafy greens across
my body and the tiled wall.

When Lane's voice called me back to her,
I wrung my hair out, toweled my body down,
dripped puddles on her buckling floor,
then lay down on the bed that smelled
like sex and dogs and summer heat,
my wet hair leaving water streaks.

That was the year that we held Roo
down in the basin, turned the shower head to low,
and pressed it to her fur. We used baby shampoo,
spoke gently. Still, she howled and shook,
her skinny body shivering
as dirt snaked down the drain—

that stupid, dingy little pup
who missed the smells we stripped her of.