

I did an X-Ray and got Bad News

On the drive to move me into college,
The doctor called me and told me that the x-ray didn't look so good.
That my condition had actually been there all along,
Like a child playing hide and seek, waiting to get caught.

You sat there listening to the conversation from the passenger seat,
The mother of snack bags and doctorate degrees, and me.

We stopped for gas.
The grass felt crispy, the air felt stale,
And I felt broken.
I just wanted to reach inside my body and
yank out the parts that weren't good anymore.

We made it to the hotel.
You scrambled to find information.
Over dinner, you gave me the numbers of a physical therapist to call,
the name of the diet I should follow now.
But all I wanted was for you to take me home.

It was different from when you had planned my birthday parties
and read my essays, drove me to dance and took me uniform shopping.
Because this time, I would be in the driver's seat.
And the passenger seat would be empty.

My first night of college, I went to a party.
Everyone was dancing and jumping to the music,
Happy to be there.
I stopped mid-jump, because I knew the pain that tonight would cause,
And I put down my cup, because I knew better now
Then to mix my drink with Advil.

I heard your voice, from the night before, at the hotel.
Reminding me of the importance of my new nighttime routine.
Before I stretched, I placed my pearl earrings in your hand,
Because you taught me to never wear jewelry to bed.

I couldn't wear them to the x-rays either.
And I saw you, from that day at the doctor's office,
Holding my striped dress and pearls.
While I sat in a paper gown, moving my body from left to right.
The nurse beckoned you over to see the pictures of my spine,

And you began to feel broken too.