

LINDA LEE HARPER

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*Aunt Cockeye*

Albert's sweetmeat.  
Hungarian rhapsody in the kitchen,  
her pastries a divine compensation  
for the half-cocked, traveling eye  
which never followed its sister,  
but took off on its own path,  
a hiker blazing its own trail.  
Harsh and pragmatic as her gas stove,  
she made us work for sugar curls  
and apricot tickles we dreamed about for days,  
scrubbing pots and dishes, floors and Albert's  
barber utensils he amassed like assassin tools  
for her to sharpen and steam.

The pastries stopped cold the day  
she found us in the basement,  
stopping his gadgets and shaving  
smooth as cherries, everything but our heads,  
the straight-edge razor dangerous  
as her displeasure with the three of us,  
hairless tarts pale as dough,  
slick as wet pears under  
the cellar's one, naked bulb.