

Missing from Home · *Maria Flook*

I'm the one they call "littlest,"
when families review losses
by accidental death or illness.

"Fat one," they named you
when the uncles came to play
pinochle with our beautiful mother.

The night before you ran away,
we went into an abandoned house
with all its lights on.
A wife had been taken by police
but her husband escaped on the B&O.

Neighbors collected
china and flatware,
and ripped the curtains loose.
You said it was stealing,
the way women smile
without showing their teeth.

I unpinned the doilies
from the chairs, knowing someone
would want them.
You kept still
before a gilt mirror.

"This makes me thin,"
you said, moving your hands
in the shape of an hour glass
or brushing some secret from
your waist.

Even the principal from the school
had come to loot,
he wore his terrible blazer.
When he removed the mirror
from the wall, you became full
of something
for a moment, but it diminished.

Our mother, examining the lace,
began to laugh
and covered her face.
She said it's crazy
about sad people.

The next day
taking no belongings
you got into some man's
flashy car.