

Enough

Poetry • Ella Morton

My mother became a scientist
the day she took a screen door
to the marshy part of the lake
in her backyard. She thought
it might hold her up. It didn't.
Pond muck oozed up through hundreds
of tiny porch screen squares
before her eyes
and beneath her feet.

When the last of my pet fish passed,
she dissected it on the back porch.
I had named it after me,
And inside all I could see was a heart
and guts like pond muck.

As a child, she opened the front door
to a man who asked
for a glass of water. When she returned
to the porch, Dixie cup in hand,
he had taken my grandmother's purse.

At her first job at the ecology lab,
the same one where her wallet was stolen
and found months later in the ceiling,
she kept a wolf spider and its babies
at her desk. She fed them tiny frogs and lizards
and crickets and watched as the mother
carried her children on her back every day.

She once pulled over the car,
walked to a tree, plucked a leaf,
and told us how the ginkgoes
are so old they grow
leaves straight off the branches.

She carried the box turtles across the road,
always in the direction they were facing.
There were so many one day

it was as if they had fallen out of a tree all at once,
like ginkgo leaves in autumn.

Coming out of T.J. Maxx
one afternoon, she confided she
was no longer confident in her own skin.
The woman who came when you were sick,
Dixie cup in hand,
The woman who held up
snakes for you to see even as
they were biting her thumb,
The woman who taught
you how terribly dangerous
but terribly wonderful the world is,
becomes a woman who tells you
she no longer feels beautiful
as if that was ever
the part of her that mattered.