

## In the Bathtub with Esther Greenwood

Betsabe Gomez

I find her soaking  
sorrows in my bathtub  
face blank and stopped  
like a dead baby.

I step over girlish clothes,  
a rumpled white blouse,  
a green skirt, thinning.

When she notices me,  
her body slumps deeper  
into the water.

“I suppose I should have asked,”  
she says, sheepish.  
“But, I wasn’t planning  
on being alive much longer.”

I see the thin razor on the floor,  
pluck it up with two fingers,  
put it in my pocket.

“I couldn’t do it. You’d think  
it would be easy, but this dull pain  
is safer than that sharp one.”

I nod to show her  
I understand, but my fingers  
are thumbing at the sharpness  
hidden in the dark of my pocket.

She keeps talking, her big toe  
peeking out from under  
the bubbles, beckoning.

She tells me a story  
I already know.  
About a dead baby,  
hypocrites, mothers.

They’re all dissolving  
in the bathwater

and she keeps repeating:

“I am pure and they are not,”  
over and over until  
I think I believe her.

I’m suddenly cold  
and want nothing more  
than to dive into the water,  
soak my body in her bubbles  
of dissolved impurities.

She asks me if I’ve ever been in love.

“It’s better that way,” she says  
when I shake my head no.

“You don’t know freedom until you lose it.”

I ask her what she means  
but her eyes point  
to the ceiling.

A strange glass hangs,  
suspended, pushing  
towards our bodies,  
a quick-cutting, painless death.