

## Emma's Tattoo

With his fingers tracing lightly across my chest,  
he kissed me, stood and adjusted his tie.  
Pausing in the doorway, he smiled,  
before disappearing down the hall.

On the way to the bathroom,  
I stopped in front of the mirror—  
Massaging my nipples  
between forefinger and thumb  
pressing up with my palms,  
to create more cleavage.

"This will be uncomfortable," the nurse said.  
I willed myself not to scream  
when the metal plates pressed,  
pressed unmercifully,  
until I thought my breasts would explode.

When the technician came  
to mark me for radiation  
I asked him to make little flowers.  
He wouldn't look at me,  
"I only have green ink."

Afterwards, the counselor told me not to look.  
On the eighth day, after my husband  
brought roses, yellow, not red,  
I locked myself in the bathroom,  
pulled away the bandages, and mourned.

Six months later, I drive  
to the outskirts of town  
to a rundown store with motorcycles parked in front.  
"Yeah, sure honey, no problem,"  
the woman wearing a studded leather corset  
nods at my drawing of a forget-me-not.  
When I pull open my blouse,  
the woman with a dragon  
climbing from her cleavage,  
crosses her arms tight,  
stumbles backward, and winces.

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