

New Poetry by Betsy Martin: “About What You Have,” “Female Figure in Photos,” and “To Missoula”



GRASSES QUIVER BEFORE / *image by Amalie Flynn*

ABOUT WHAT YOU HAVE

In my dream
Dad, age one hundred twelve,
has his first cell phone—

big and square,
with a rotary dial.

With a proud index finger
he dials my mother,

gets her voice mail.
Together we lean in,
listen

to her low, drifty voice,
its mist so warm on my ear
as it rises from deep underground.

I ask Dad for *his* number,
but he can't recall it
before fading into the passage. He's left me

messages, though,
like: When eating fish be careful

not to get a bone stuck in your throat; when walking
tuck in the tummy; think
about what you have,
not about what you don't.

FEMALE FIGURE IN PHOTOS

fourteen-year-old mop of hair
sullen air in mod raincoat
on London sidewalk with
beaming scowling father brother

seventeen leaning
on brick wall in black-and-white flannel shirt
no cigarette yet mien
as in movies seen through a puff of smoke

college-era long hair
akimbo arms
eyes narrowed
to spot foe in tall grass

sixty odd in a museum at a window
face a little wooden
and through the panes
an autumn-leafed tree flames

TO MISSOULA

The cold air her pillow of courage, she skirts
the northern rim of the nation.

As she crosses the Dakota Badlands,
where even the hardest grasses quiver
before earth's uprisings and revolutions,

her eastern forest home has tilted
and is sliding over the rim!

She pulls her wings in closer
to fly fast and low

over layers of pink and gray guts
squeezed from deep under.

A tail feather tears loose,
whirls away;

she almost bursts into a plume of magma.

Night cools into dawn.

She parks the car,
steps out into a new world,
a young woman with compass and camera
and a crown of mountains.