

Bompa

His favorite word was Jackass
his name, Bompa (boom-pahh)
was from the Flemish word for Grandpa

\'jak-,as

he spit this out of his throat while driving
flung it at bankers and mothers and teenagers and
teachers
when they clogged the avenues in their cars

if the sun was out and his window was down
he broiled his fist into the air

he unclenched his fist to cook eggs with eight cheeses on
Sunday
to play backgammon and sip smoked whiskey
to tell his story about the monk in the mountains
to thumb through books
to write a poem about a cat

he uncrumpled dollar bills on a counter to buy my
eleventh birthday present
a Merriam-Webster Dictionary
big and red
a monument, it now lays on my desk

tucked inside was a letter

Treasure,

he called the dictionary

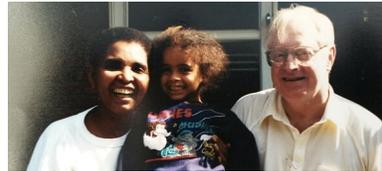
Jewels,

he called words

Beloved,

he called me

he wrote his name phonetically, with two o's in the middle



The dictionary sat next to me
when I ate Bompa's pasta with salt and butter
from a bowl filled with pale little dinosaurs
a stegosaurus, a triceratops, some sauropods, I swallowed them whole

grease stains decorate the pages
where the paper absorbed my fingertips
I looked at words until they filled me up
until the sun disappeared
and Bompa called me from his book-lined study

Bompa's voice vibrated, as if from a whale's belly
Danielle, there are no Rice Krispies in the house
he boomed

his paper skin reflected off my grandmother's dark dark
complexion

his head was a mound of sleek red waves
hers a thick black halo
oil and water, Black and white,
they were not expected to merge

but they did
together, they raised four children
and proudly walked the streets

an unfamiliar swirl of colors, rarely seen side by side
this hurt the eyes of bystanders
to soften the glare, it was only him they looked at
not the woman, two boys, one girl, and dark haired baby
clustered next to him

it was only him they addressed

Can't you see these are my children
No we will not sit in the back, this table suits us just fine
This is my wife

he boomed
waving away insinuations and would-be insults

when Bompa died, his hands were blue
and his back was warm.