

PIEMAKING—YARMOUTH, MAINE 1964

Apple picking season, the other-worldly image
of my grandmother, always returns, ghosting
crimped corners of my grown-up mind—
her beehive hair, her creased hands, mixing
air and light with Crisco & plumes of Gold Medal flour.

Woodsy, citrus scents of Fels-Naptha soap—
laundry snapped like pirate flags
from the sagging rope of Garmie's clothesline.
A grainy, black and white photograph anchors
Garmie's farmhouse in another place and time.

Inside the house, inside the photo, inside this poem,
I'm nine years old, testing one foot at a time
as I scootch down the chilly attic staircase, hugging tight
the bulky waist of a sweetgum basket. Face
pressed against blushed cheeks of Northern Spies,

McIntosh, Black Oxfords, or maybe Jonagolds, I carry the cold,
tangy breath of Garmie's apple orchard in my arms.
Apple basket settled on her checkered linoleum floor,
I drag up a chair, watch the whirr of spinning cogs
and gears—spellbound by Garmie as she cranks

the wooden handle of her cast iron apple-peeling
machine. Come fall, red peelings forever kite-tail
through my memory and imagination. Unbroken
curls of apple skin still dangle childhood magic
from the end of Garmie's chrome-edged, kitchen table.

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