

RISHMA DUNLOP

Beauty

for Cara

Yes, we were young and beautiful
with our noble exhaustion

pushing our strollers and our futures
to school in orchard country, the season

clocked forward by harvests of cherries,
in the arms of the valley,

roads crackling with sagebrush and desert drought.

And the days were also beautiful:
the old steam paddle ship moored in the lake,

the vineyard tours and Happy Hours
at the beachside diner and bar.

Ours was a small town—a summer town—
traffic stopped to let Canada Geese and families

of quail bob across the road.

The high school advertised the prom band—
The Peachland Rollers.

Summer and the living was easy—
your father and I were in love,

hungry for the plum kisses among the Ponderosa pines,
sealing the hours under our roof of stars,

where light reads like a fable.

And you were my beauty, my daughter—
you and your sister bikinied poolside,

laughing with your cans of Coke
about how things were—

Ferris wheel turning in the Conklin fair,
your long limbs running for the lake,

hitting the water to cool the heat
of your body chasing beauty

for which we had no words.