

## I Never Liked Ghost Stories

When you were young  
and you looked into it,  
something else was there  
looking back into you.  
It had eyes like yours--  
and nothing else--  
a stolen after-image of something you  
couldn't  
explain.  
Something that you couldn't tell anyone about.  
And it turned into shouldn't.

People gave you photographs of  
*it*.  
The thing,  
that lives in the mirror  
and said,  
"Look,  
that's you,"  
and you were very young.  
So young,  
that when you grimaced,  
and turned away from the photograph, they misinterpreted.  
They got you sweaters,  
and let you go off and play with your toys,  
they sent Aunt Dorothy and her bad breath off into the corner of the house for busy work,  
(and it wasn't like you couldn't have been just cold or bored or sick of Aunt Dorothy,)  
but that wasn't  
*it*.  
And you didn't even know how to tell them  
that something was wrong.

When you got older, you still didn't like going into the bathroom  
after dark because  
then you couldn't just put  
the face  
on top of the photographs  
and tell yourself,  
"Look, that's me."  
It didn't look right.  
It followed your every muscle twitch.

And the long hair waved in barely any wind.  
And the dress--  
it was so little,  
and so,  
so  
so

And even now you can barely form the words.  
Even now, you are scared of the mirror.  
Because when you described it to someone,  
the thing did not break, did not shatter,  
did not dissipate into the morning dew,  
a ghost to be laughed about around campfires for years to come,  
it stayed.  
The thing got stronger,  
Riled up with all its strength and bit.  
Hard.  
And now you lurk in corners, feeling it's touch in unexpected places.  
Biting your tongue because everytime you talk about it it only becomes more real.  
You are a slave to its absence,  
you cut your hair,  
you wear charms,  
and make armor out of chaotic bits of cloth,  
mis-matching and guessing your way until you feel rid of its presence.  
And it still lurks,  
hiding in the warped reflections  
on other people's eyes,  
and hanging on the walls  
in the photographs  
where you couldn't  
be careful  
enough.