

Kiddie Pool
By Madison Barlow

splash of water in my face
a whole wave of something new
I catch my breath, water running up
my nostrils, it is burning like fresh fire
so I cough and squeeze and pinch my
nose
I throw my head down and close my eyes
where did this water come from?

this water flowed through the veins
of a family, sputtering and moving
while she spoke and comforted
I stayed curled up in a bassinet
full of childish whimsy and unbeknownst
pride

who owned that house?
and who tampered the water supply
when the hurricane came
and shook up the walls
when the flood entered and
soaked up the wood; made it rot
who hid the foul smell
of the wet, tear ridden floorboards

when father slept on the couch
his head half sunken into a puddle
but "men don't cry"
do they now
this water is mysterious and still
he wakes up, hair soaked

forehead a bit pruned

I ask

“father, how do we wash
this water away?”

but he turns to my mother
who tells him

“the water will dry up in a day,”

but the water always stayed
creeping up in the dark nights of
summer

long rain showers ending with
misty dew strung on the tall grass
the water was collected in buckets
hailed out to the backyard
where they stayed
stacked up like some bricks

maybe momma used the water
to fill up our kiddie pool
my sisters and I knee deep
in the liquid, smiling and pretty
as if the summer would never end

take a needle to the plastic circle
that's covered in dancing crabs
and octopi wearing goggles
silly seaweed and puffer fish

I find my breath again
and I look down at my hands
it'll dry up, this wave
an empty bay

now I sit and watch the horizon