

Women on Motorcycles

by Jennifer Donnell

Do you want this, you ask, and hand me a blue silk shirt of hers
with small yellow flowers. I'm afraid to say no,
in case it makes you remember all over again.

Her red suitcase is laid out and smells of tires and dust.
No it doesn't, you tell me, annoyed, and spray some of her perfume
in the hallway, bedroom, and foyer.

The next day it still smells of that half used bottle.

You instruct me to take anything I want
and I fill a bag with the least offending options-
a few tank tops, a summer dress with the tag still on it, and some
cardigan sweaters.

I remind myself to never leave anything in my closet unworn,
to live life here and now, but sometimes we aren't that different,
your mother and I.

She confided that the only thing she ever wanted was love
and the only thing I've ever wanted is love.
We find a book of poems in a box of her things.
Men on Motorcycles, is the name of one,
Empty Space, is the name of another.

I read them aloud to you and give her a voice,
hoping to earn her some forgiveness for the times
she wasn't there for you and left that wound
you and your brother could never fully absolve.
It's a sad, lost voice trying to find strength;
hurt and broken by men, abused, imperfect but resolute.

I put her old clothes in the hamper to wash away
the sadness and dust. I hope that is love.

