

My Neighbor in the Apartment Across the Hall

by Robert James Russell

She's an obese woman whose clothes
don't fit: shirts that ride up too high
her belly hanging out her pants
suctioned to her strangely pegged legs.
Her ballooned cheeks are always chapped pink
her lips little slivers peeled back over
small beige teeth like riverstones
set in swollen gums. Her hair is
luxurious but she doesn't seem
to know what to do with it; she often
touches loose strands when people walk by,
a nervous tick perhaps.
Her sister is always visiting and they
gather outside my window
pacing and talking in loud practiced dialogues
about their collective woes.
She's married to a Mexican man
half her size named Marco whom
she fights with daily, usually about
their daughter, a small wispy thing
that never makes a peep.
She has eyes like wildfires
but you can tell, talking to her even briefly,
that she doesn't expect to get
to where it is she wishes she was going.

