

my weight

At sixteen, I said I hated my father. Instead of a slap, my mother gave me a smirk and said, “Careful there, all girls marry their father someday.”

I promised I wouldn't, and I didn't. My father's frame filled doorways; his mood loomed like a low ceiling. I dated featherweights and introverts, men whose eyes jumped to me before they made a decision or spoke out. I have my father's build—linebacker shoulders and heavy, flat feet—and I know how to throw my weight around without moving a centimeter. I married a small, spectacled man: a thinker. He grows heirloom tomatoes, laughs softly at my barbed jokes, plays a storm on the piano but rarely speaks.

I adore my little man, yet I find myself eyeing the soft bellies of washed up athletes, engaging the chatty middle-aged hotheads who wage daily war at the coffee stand, smiling for the tattooed, misunderstood biker-giants. I lift

weights at the most run-down gym in town for a chance to be around the old, milky-eyed Marine who won't stop showing up the young guys, loading a bar with every forty-five in sight and bending it above his cracking, brittle back.

My father's torso was like slipping into a hard boiled egg—the perfect cocoon. In my husband's arms I have felt tender but not safe. When I can, I befriend these men whose daughters have grown and left them. My mother occasionally updates me on my father's health. In a dusty corner of the gym, I do more push-ups than I should and watch for him.