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## The Unfolding

Melissa Kalinowski  
*Grand Valley State University*

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# The Unfolding

*Melissa Kalinowski*

Sometimes I feel heavy, laden,  
waterlogged.  
I'm trying to swim.  
Everything is black and white  
and shades of gray.  
In the sky are screens that show  
flashes, pictures of my life, his life,  
the tired woman at the corner store  
who knew I stole the gum but  
didn't say anything, the boy from  
English class who ran away from home,  
twice.

Those were places we were then . . .  
gathered in a stranger's woods  
around a bonfire  
lying on the ground talking  
with unsteady smiles.  
We aren't there now.  
That doesn't mean I can't still  
see the shine on my aunt's curls  
on a Sunday morning.

I sense Sean's body, lean, toned  
as he walks down hallways,  
feline, on the prowl like a tiger,  
only, a tiger in a high school hallway -  
tail bumping against lockers.

I know now that at those moments  
I was on fire and didn't even know it,  
not until I found the cinders  
inside my pockets.

That voice, his laugh,  
it takes me through years of  
myself - as a girl unfolding.  
I will never return to those days,  
those smiles, my fevers on  
October nights when Mom

worries in her room:

“It's 102°, go down, go down . . .”

I'd like to go down, go back,  
to mulberry tree days and fireworks  
at dusk - I can't do that.

I will never be those people  
and places again.

They remain just around the corner,  
in the dusty mason jar on the top shelf  
that you could never reach.

Lives seem stagnant  
but they are always curving,  
shaping you from sidewalk  
hopscotch, scabby knees, and  
grandma's pea pod garden.

You shape to watching faces fade,  
hearing that your heroes gave up  
dragging burnt out stars behind them -  
a dead weight, and  
coming into your own -  
the life you knew was coming.