

Crocodilian

by Meg Pokrass

"A part of growing old is folding things in half," she said, folding all the kitchen dish towels.

I saw how the family luck, clingy as cat hair, never had a chance to break free. I learned that my mother's luck was a wan cup of Pepsi that has been out all night for a sick child, flat and then discarded. On our stoop, luck cleared its throat like a Mormon missionary and walked away.

Now, the fake flagstone stone stairs leading up to our house are crazy, and our door knob is black. The sky and the moon always dawdling, absentmindedly humming, doing what the newspapers say.

Her luck was crocodilian, it ate her and I was next in line. I was the child waiting in the shallow water... for soft, tickling fish.

Her luck once had the dreamy lick of salt between us - and then I was born to her... screaming and wanting nothing to do with human milk. I imagine her whisking soy powder into water. The rise of her functional breasts.

We got rid of the dog because he bit the postman. My father left because he hated animals. We still had the three cats. He had a point. I munched carrots instead of crying, my feet and the palms of my hands became orange.

To kill our bad luck, I became the world's best. Best at things nobody bragged about:

1. chopping onions without ruining my makeup.
2. opening a curtain and seeing God in the wet air.
3. brightening my nights by moving things along the softest part of my body.

Luck sways and eats itself. Mom watches less TV and still folds towels. Soon, a boy will find me sitting alone at recess and say, "Hey."

That boy will find me attractive and say, "You are cuter than you think."

He'll try to change my luck while begging for cigarettes, and I'll offer them.

He'll trot to his car to get a lighter, and he'll bring a snack bag of nuts, pistachios... and we'll share them... sitting behind the school library, coughing and munching and kissing, echoing the others lips.

