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Phoebe

Let's select someone from your past,
the doctor says. *Someone you trusted.*
I line them all up,
a spray of snapshots,
but no one really qualifies.

Then I remember the miniature being
who appeared at my shoulder once when I was resting,
cape fluttering, arms out like Dogoda,
tiny goddess of the west wind,

my mother's and father's first-born
who because of their mourning
was a memory
I was forbidden to share.

Gone nine years before my birthday,
strangled by the umbilical cord,
the lilac breath of my sister.

I don't know what they intended to name her.
I call her Phoebe, daughter of Gaea.
Phoebe would have peach fuzz like Mother
without the cigarette breath.

She would wear loose-weave wool skirts,
have long arms and wisdom
and would be my shepherdess.

I talk to Phoebe.
I don't wait for an answer.
I tell her everything.
On my walks, in the car.

I tell her about Mother and her illness,
about Dad surviving his way to death.
Everything.

(continued)

Communing with Phoebe

I remember a photo of me
holding a small bag of copper hobby wire,
resigned, unsmiling.

I put my arms around my neck
and comfort me.