

Friendship, sometimes, is fleeting

Emily Stout

We lived in a blue duplex in the foothills of Boise
when I was eleven years old.

I felt old, sipping tea before bed,
my little sister laying in the neighboring twin.

One morning at the bottom of the mug, in the muddy
puddle of sugar, there was a sticky brown body.

The cockroach must have smelled its way in the dark,
crawled along the handle like I did on the long branch

of my grandmother's tree. I didn't scream, just counted
the hairs on its legs caught in dried sugar. 23?

I whispered goodbye, poured it
out the window, into the landscape

where we went hiking on Sundays

where we had to listen

for rattlesnakes in the grass.

Cockroaches can run up to three miles an hour—

Where was it going?

What other spot of sweetness?