

ROSEMARY CLEWES

## A Taste of Lemon

Saturday mornings mother washed my hair.  
I knelt, knees doubled on the high stool,  
  head tipped  
into the basin: her fingers knowing all the tender places,  
cast and slope of my crown,  
  temple hollows.

I gulped air between cupfuls dowsing soapy drifts  
washcloth pressed  
  pixilated light waves chasing stars  
behind my eyes  
  suds whispering staticy nothings  
as I imagine clouds would if they could talk.

My mother always trickled fresh lemon at the end,  
then rinsed. Its taste made me lick my lips like a cuddled puppy.  
She toweled and combed.

  “Ohooo,” I moaned, “you’re hurting me,”  
but my hair dried to fly-away-fineness. I listened,  
eyes half-closed to the crackling air, her hands gathering,  
tightening a wide ribbon’s rustling loops over my right ear.  
A taffeta bow.

  I reach up to caress the shine, the artful bow.  
My first line of poetry pops out before I know it.  
Pleased, I profess—my hair is crisp as bacon.