

when you meet her today

when you meet her today
you won't know
she was Miss Calumet City
that she went to stenographer school
as her prize
that she worked
in the same courtroom
for 40 years
you won't know
she is the youngest
of 3 sisters
that she had to ride
in the backseat
on the floor
her middle sister
got the shelf under the sloped rear window
while the oldest got
the full bench seat
you won't know
the doctor
told her
she couldn't have babies

when you meet her today
you won't know
she had a bad ear infection
as a baby
that it worked its way down
into her shoulder
causing her right arm
to grow 4 inches shorter
than her left
that she was brave
and got it fixed
that she went on to be
a champion dancer
that her courage stuck with her
long enough to move away
and chase her dreams
you won't know
she pulled

her little sister's
arm out of socket
twice
that she used to scare
all the neighborhood kids
with snakes
you won't know
she's expecting
her second
is on the way

when you meet her today
you won't know
she refused
to go to preschool
that she convinced her parents
to let her
drop out of catholic school
in fifth grade
that her art history course
in college
was the first time
she learned of other gods
you won't know
all the accidents
or awards
you won't know
her hopes for family

my mother, my sister, and me