She Took Off Her Wings And Shoes

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Published by Utah State University Press

Bishop, Suzette.
She Took Off Her Wings And Shoes.
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MIRROR AND SWORD TRICK

Buy something for yourself
for a change,
my stepmother tells my father
something very expensive,
estragant
like the four-hundred-dollar
mirror she bought,
swimming pool blue,
two palm trees carved
on each side,
or the bamboo furniture
she had flown in from Japan.
My father bought a sword
that was stolen a month later.
I never saw it,
but he said it was silver
with a carved silver sheath.
I imagine engravings of men fighting,
swords raised, clashing
in fiery swirls.
A heavy weapon
he had to hold with both hands,
his fingers wrapped around the handle
in admiration.
Did he try it on?
Admire himself wearing it
in the mirror?
Does he miss the heaviness
of silver?
One of my father’s brothers
was shot down during World War II
in his plane,
another brother, useless, lived at home
his whole life,
the third brother, an alcoholic, called drunk all the time in the middle of the night, last year, a suicide in his sixties.

All four brothers trapped, one in his crashing plane, one in the house where he was born, one in a glass, my father with this woman who orders him around, arranging every part of his life, filling his house to the ceiling with knickknacks, jars in the shapes of a figurehead, a bunch of grapes, a swordfish, ceramic animals, and the sword he could have used to smash everything slashing through the bamboo furniture escaping through the crack in the mirror between the palm trees out into the swampland around him, vanished.