It’s as simple as the slip of the lips. Some say tongue, but I’ve seen everything.

Wrapped in plastic. Supermarket cold-cuts, sweating chilled, sedentary.

And maybe they tell tall tales at night, when the pale tile floors are no longer lighted—the bologna to the ham. I know they’re made up.

But That’s where I heard this one: a daughter and mother hurry two little steps fitting comfortably inside mother’s stride. Her sneakers blinked on fire, flashing red at the heels, like an emergency.

And by the slip of the lips, mind you, mother calls out to the girl, who is falling behind and unable to keep up...

“Hurry up, Claire.” But Claire isn’t right. No, now the steel-clattered cart, full of bread, eggs, all things white—crystalline. Unbroken.

Claire is not her name.
From my post
by the produce, I can’t tell if
the mother knows her sin, or if
the daughter’s chest splinters...

My tongue feels heavy; it needs
to be swallowed or caressed, told
everything’s alright because
a name is the first thing
we are given, and the
only thing we have.