

CRAMPS

JESSICA MARTORANO

For Christmas my mom got me a pair of socks
that say “3 days of cramps make me a badass.”
But my threshold is the leaf-strewn front-door mat
of a garden apartment,
and the ache is the top of an
ancient dogwood where I stand, only 5’4
with a belly bloated with knives and
sailor tied knots and chains
of crimson-hot pain
that stabs and rolls back and
forth between my abdomen and lower spine.

My body rebels against me.

They say it’s a magical gift—to
bear and create life.
But Earth is a mother, too;
as her children grow to poison her slowly,
excrement of oil flowing freely
through her watery veins.

Oil pulsing into her heart—we don’t blink.
The very blood necessary for every child inside—
committing matricide,

but what we don't know
is that we are still connected.

We kill ourselves.
We kill our mother.