

# 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.