Peer at your reflection
in the smooth skin of the eggplant
your father would never eat,
in the peppers that grew in your small garden,
in the glob of Heinz ketchup
you attempted to drown your green beans in.

Snuggle close to the threadbare fur
of the one-eyed dinosaur, whose arms
you clasped tightly around you
every night before going to sleep,
to the right head of a Dragon Tale,
a fleeting vision of the street sweeper
with the graveyard of stuffed animals in its grill.

Clutch the wiffle ball scoop with which
you plucked the scratched plastic ball tossed by your mother from the air;
study the swirling surface of the rubber ball
before it cleared the backyard fence
for the 19th time and splashed once more into the middle of the lake.

Gulp the 44-ounce Fanta cherry and blue raspberry gas station slushies you and your sister downed with your father’s blessing, rushing home to scrub your lips raw and shine your stained teeth before your mother could discover your secret sin.

Listen to the late-night crackle of the sizzling explosions that sliced the sky once a year in July, to the rustling of the glued, taped, and tied array of streamers that dragged the street behind the caravan of another year’s homecoming floats.

Marvel at the swirling particles that stained the porcelain toilet bowl after your sister learned that vitamins don’t flush; stare transfixed at the bruise-like beds of your nails after another Indiana winter.

Try to see the allure of an amethyst ring glistening in the glass case at JC Penney when all you can think of are one-eyed dinosaurs, eggplants, and the murders of hundreds of thiamin lions.