

When I was 13 my mother
sent me off to camp with
 2 orange sheets
 2 pink pillowcases
 4 green towels
 2 green hand-towels
 4 yellow washcloths
 and a blue blanket
with a burn hole in it.

She'd ironed on laundry tags
with *JESSICA ROSENFELD*
lettered impatiently on each
in permanent marker.
It was the blue blanket
from my big sister's bed
when she fell asleep
with a cigarette in her hand
after trying to kill herself.

Her room had a blue rug
and light blue walls.
Mine had a pink rug
and light pink walls.
Also, orange shelves
and a green nightstand.

The doctor said the pills
wouldn't have killed her
but the cigarette
would have burned the house down.

For months I imagined what if
no one had found her,
how I'd have dressed
what teachers would say
all kinds of graphic details
about the body pictured wrong,
the way you picture sex
before you've had it.

That my mother packed that blanket
in my JC Penney's trunk.
That she didn't throw it out,
as if an overdose
was just another bad day
in the Rosenfeld house.
Didn't think how I'd feel
to get my sister's
death-wish hand-me-downs,
listen to the counselor
read *The Giving Tree*
in Bunk 9, let her tuck me in
my sister's hospital-cornered shadow
the jagged gash
in our family's fabric exposed.

My mother's belief
that no one could see
what she was afraid to
swathed my childhood.
How long after was it,
when I stopped recognizing
the penned name
as my own?