

### The Pick

She's not afraid to live alone near the Gulf Coast,  
land of fire ants, scorpions, and reptiles large enough  
to eat a man. Home of the bikers' Softtail Bar.

And though Mom's shrunk two inches  
in the last few years, she's still fierce, all  
four-foot-seven of her waving a dead scorpion

in my face at breakfast, *Smacked it next to my bed!*  
And the large black snake coiled in the shed?  
*Good! They eat bugs—just watch where you step.*

But there's a wobble to her slowing gait.  
Bulging varicosities map her eighty-five years—  
the younger sister she will not see, the neighbor's

Christ harangues, the slights and stings, the scrimping.  
And the what-might-have-beens—the 8x10 portrait  
of Roy, her dashing wartime boyfriend.

“To Dottie, with Love,” it says, her own  
youthful photo now placed between his  
and my dead father's, her beloved—

one choice made among the many  
she sorts through, picking over blueberries,  
tossing aside those too green, others too soft,

fingering each blue globe  
as if it were possible to guess  
where the sweetest tastes might lie.