**Shoes and an old woman who once lived in them** *by Julia Usman*

Before I was your mother

I lived in kitten heels/ stilettos/ mules.

I was a woman with so many feet

I didn’t know whether to laugh/ dance/ run wild,

so, I carried them all on the outside,

until I met a blind-date/ lover/ stranger.

My shoes would make small talk/ flirt/ lie,

but this lie/ half-truth/ misunderstanding,

attached itself to my sole as though

I had walked into my bruises

deliberately/ accidentally. You see,

when I was young enough not to be your mother,

I believed in love/ true love/ happily ever after,

even though my shoes gave me blisters/

a split lip/ black eye, because

the only fantasy/ fairy story / bull-shit

I failed to walk past, was the fist of a man

with a bankrupt smile/ large cash account/ ego,

who emptied my heart of shoes

and replaced them with his boots.

Now this old woman lives barefoot/ alone,

and the only shoes I own, live in a box/

a scar/ an empty bed, where I imagine

I am your moccasins/ your slippers/ your home.