

Chimayo, New Mexico

This is happening in the backroom
of the unpainted adobe church,
adorned with wooden double doors
visible behind us in the photograph.

I shield my eyes
while my sister raises three fingers.
A clear day the reason we get to play outside,

why there exists another photograph of my sister
with a sprig of rosemary in her mouth gazing up
as I climb Mary
to deliver a crown of poppies.

Later, I take a picture of a terracotta tile,
one edge imprinted with a dog's paw,
a primitive photograph itself.

I think of getting a shot of our father
while he rests his hands on a polished pew,
but turn instead toward a painting
where Mary Magdalene kneels in a red dress,
hair dripping, Jesus' hand close enough
to feel heat from her lips.
Two strips of purple fabric cloak the painting like a veil

as if their bodies formed a face, but none of this
will be visible when the film is developed.
Just a gilded frame surrounding a darkness,
limitless and without reason.

Like the wood and steel crutches hanging from rusted nails
in this backroom, names etched along the edges,

crutches in every corner and hanging from the ceiling.
Above the door, one pair intersects
to form a cross, held together by the belt of a hospital robe.

The pictures of us appear here years later,
taped to this back wall with hundreds of others facing

our father who now kneels on the earthen floor by a hole
growing deeper as word of the healing dirt spreads.