You were young, maybe early twenties,
when the police pulled you over.
Put your hands on the wheel
the one closest to your rolled down window said.
The one farther back,
the one standing with his muscles taut and agitated,
the one with his finger on the trigger,
said nothing.
Slowly
he yelled
when you put your shaking, trembling fingers
on the wheel
too quickly,
too criminally.
The finger on the trigger twitched.
License and registration
he said next and you reached for your pocket,
slowly
watching
the finger on the trigger
tighten.
You pull out your wallet
and let out a breath.
He didn’t shoot.
He could have.
But you are white
so he didn’t.

You are white
so you are telling me this story
in the kitchen of our red brick house,
laughing because it was so long ago
and you are white so you can laugh
about these things.
You waited a long time for the officer.
He came back
but things were different,
his gait easy and his shoulders relaxed.
The finger eased off the trigger.
Isn’t it funny
he said.
You matched the description
of someone they were looking for.
Isn’t that funny.
Good thing the description was of a white man.
Good thing you were a white man.
We’re lucky, I guess.
Sitting at the kitchen counter,
picking at the loose thread
on my pajama pants, watching
it unravel,
thinking
I’m here
I’m alive
because they didn’t kill you.
Because you are white.
But what about all the little girls
who listen to this story at their kitchen counters
from their mothers,
as they pick at loose threads and hear
a different ending?
What about all the children that
aren’t here
aren’t alive?
We’re lucky
I guess.