

Aunt Josie

JANET PROULX

Favored form-fitting blouses,
pencil skirts and strappy-heeled shoes,
Eva Gabor wigs in every color
while her sisters wore polyester
canvas sneakers in red, white, or blue
nylon kerchiefs over pincurled hair,
requisite before church on Sunday.

She married a hard-living lumberjack
from a hardscrabble town in Maine.
They lived in a tiny aluminum trailer
with guns and taxidermied creatures,
glass eyes staring from every corner.

When she'd visit, I'd stay close.
"Doll," she'd say, "get me a beer."
I'd fetch a longneck and church key
open the bottle with a practiced hand,
adding a small glass and a shaker of salt,
just the way she liked it.

Aunt Josie drove up an exit ramp
right before Christmas,
died on impact, we were told.
At the funeral parlor
her bruises hardly showed
under the mortician's ministrations
in a coffin lined with pink satin
platinum hair on a matching pillow:
so glamorous, so Hollywood.