

## The Problem with Love

My brother died & I got his tarantula.  
Ma asked if I was fucking man enough  
& I said “Yeah” so she handed me a book,  
*Tarantulas, Their Captive Husbandry  
& Reproduction*, & went back to her TV shows.  
It was a girl spider. She lived in a fish tank  
with plastic ferns & a tiny house  
just big enough to hide in.  
She let me hold her & she never bit.  
She spun a silk forest to decorate her house.  
I fed her bugs & told her tales  
I made up about Pa. I came in the room  
& she rattled her little pedipalp hands,  
which they do when mating,  
hoping I’d pick her up. One day  
she fell off my arm onto the floor  
& just lay there a second  
before creeping toward her fish tank,  
& one of her legs fell off.  
I placed her in, gently.  
She crawled, wonky, into her house.  
I had a bad dream that night.  
I woke in the dark, found Ma’s hair scissors,  
reached into the spider’s house  
& cut off a leg. She hissed at me  
& hid. Next morning she wobbled  
out to greet me, & I cut off another leg.  
Each day I cut another leg.  
She stopped spinning a silk forest.  
Her legs grew back  
& I just cut them off again.  
Soon she wouldn’t come out  
of her house, or eat her crickets.  
She tossed sharp hairs at me,  
teeny spears. Then her legs  
did not grow back. She sat in her house,  
gray, hissing like a punctured  
basketball. One morning  
I scooped her into my palm,  
chatting like the old days  
& she just sat there, not biting.  
In the backyard I lowered her  
onto an anthill. As the red ants

climbed her, swarmed & lynched her,  
I hosed down the fish tank.  
It took ten minutes to scrub it spotless,  
so the sun really shone through the glass.