

Pumpkin Patch
by Jenny Fox

I insist on perfect pictures in the pumpkin patch.
These illusions will convince you,
and us too,
that our days are smooth and shiny bright orange
like the Great Pumpkin glowing in the moonlight for Charlie Brown.
Before and after they pose,
they fight about whether dirt has germs and bees are dangerous or not.
They get their ankles tangled in the twisted vines that bind the wounded pumpkins to each other.
Pock marked and filthy,
these pumpkins are doomed to watch one another rot;
cruel to come to an end while shackled to another who is doing the same.
I will hold my babies close even when wounded.
I pressed my lips to their heads right from the womb,
still dripping with goo.
I laid eyes on the bloodied slash the surgeon left behind after fixing the younger one's heart
and called that oozing wound beautiful.
I taped together the flaccid gash my dresser gave the older one's scalp
and saw to its healing alone.
I have held their feverish heads while violent vomit landed in my lap.
I have wiped putrid shit off their backsides.
And I will hold them to my breast over my punching fearful heart,
after being kicked about
and decaying from within,
just like those rejected pumpkins littering this orchard.
My own sores still open and festering,
would you hold me close,
though wounded and rotten?