

Comfort Food

by Isabelle Byrnes-Bartell

I was raised on Catholic schoolgirl skirts
pleated and fresh strawberries covered in sugar

my grandmother, waiting for me at the top
of the stairs, full of grace, ready with a bowl

of my favorite after-school snack,
her two-step process, cut off the tops then smother

my grandfather let the sugar blanket the fruit
like dew, Then stick the bowl in the fridge,

give them a day of rest, take it out the next morning,
and top it over waffles. I find it on either side of the family,

subtle but a tradition, blessed is the fruit of thy womb
Even the sweetest things taste bitter when you spent

your entire life sugar-coated. What's life without God,
but death? Rose-colored glasses, show me heaven

What's the point of life without reward?
What's the point of dinner without dessert?

Now and at the hour of my death
I've been so good with a strawberry on top