

## *Conglobation*

by Megan McCormack

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In the basement bathroom  
I almost step on them  
With bare feet  
Hundreds of husks  
Of pill bugs  
All converging  
At the darkest corner  
Of the concrete shower  
They are piled on top  
Of each other  
Dead at the apex  
Of their journey  
I scoop them up  
In my hands  
Staring at their outstretched legs  
And bent antennae  
So light  
I can hardly feel their bodies  
Roll off my palm  
And into the drain

For six years  
You grabbed my stomach  
Squeezing the flesh  
With your hands

Sometimes you'd bite it  
Purple ovals  
From yellow teeth  
That lasted for days  
Other times  
You shook the fat  
Laughing  
At the ripples you made  
*I'm just teasing,*  
You'd tell me,  
*That's how you know*  
*I love you*  
I tried pulling my knees  
To my breasts  
Held them with my arms  
Your fingertips  
Would push into my rib cage  
Until I had no choice  
Until I couldn't breathe

Hot summer days  
Of my childhood  
Were for collecting  
We lifted big stones  
To find them  
We called them  
"roly-polies"  
Because they curled  
Into gray, armored  
Cannonballs  
On our palms  
We used our fingernails  
To force them to unroll,  
To reveal their legs  
Soft abdomens  
And sometimes

Little white eggs  
Once my sister and I  
Shoveled dirt and moss  
Into an old fish tank  
We emptied our collection  
Into it  
Our roly-poly colony  
We put the tank  
On the rotting porch  
And lay on our bellies,  
Eyes level with the dirt  
As we began to name them,  
The largest pill bug  
Began to eat the others  
One by one,  
Gnawing through the abdomen  
Consuming through squirming legs  
“Should we stop it?”  
My sister asked.  
I told her  
“No, we let cannibals  
Be cannibals.”