

The South is Such a Funny Ass Creature

“you don’t know how to cook?”
my best friend’s stepdad
asks me into the phone

his sharp chuckles
invades our weekly call
where we exchange salacious, sex fantasies
about former, current,
and window-shopped love interests

while a heated debate simmers in the corner
over which fast food place
has the best chicken sandwich

and thoughts of
our place in the world
if we’re ever gonna find it
or if it will ever find us
whichever comes first
heaped onto it

“no, I just throw stuff together usually” I say
My best friend laughs sweetly
because
She lives in a trailer of Mama,
Stepdaddy,
Grandma,
older sissy
and sometimes oldest sissy
and bubba
when they dump their kids off
to be kids themselves

So, she laughs when it’s funny
and laughs when it isn’t funny

to remind everyone else
that she’s still there

tucked away in the background
directed to say a line
or two every now and then
when she's called upon

“Well, how you gon’ find a husband and don’t know how to cook?”
her mama barges in right next to her husband
who waited on her to fix him a sandwich
after her late night shift

clanging pots and running water drowns out
the talk drumming in my friend’s throat
as she tries to stick up for me
But as plain as day I say:
“Cooking don’t keep a man”

my best friend just laughs and laughs
her mama and stepdaddy don’t know what to make of a woman like me
they end up fixing a meal to fill her belly up
but not to nourish her voice into something
other than sickly, sweet laughter