

Piper Moss

Seashell Creatures

When you hold a seashell up to your ear
they say you can hear the ocean
even though it's just your own blood
rushing through your head.

The shell acts only as a wall
off which the sound can bounce at random.
Sometimes it works; sometimes it doesn't,
Changing each time you hold it.

I was very young
when my grandmother became a seashell.
In my eyes, she'd seemed nothing more
than a strange creation lying around
as shells so often do at first glance.

Seashells start as the exoskeletons
of creatures like snails and clams.
When the creature dies,
the shell loses itself,
a fossil with fleeting memories
of its lost identity.

My grandmother held onto herself
for a long time, even as her memories
died off year after year
and the shell became emptier and emptier.

I saw only snapshots
of her fossilization.
Sometimes, she repeats herself several times
or shows me her new drawings twice.

I wasn't there as she
withered in her shell,
becoming an echo board
of ricocheting memories.

But all you ever see of seashells
is the finished product.

I was very young
when my grandmother became a seashell.
I hadn't realized she'd already fossilized,
but no one notices a seashell is lacking
until they understand that the creature inside
is gone.

Piper Moss is a student at Denver School of the Arts (DSA), Colorado's top arts high school. She began as a pianist, then shifted focus to writing. She has published poetry in *Calling Upon Calliope* (DSA's nationally ranked literary magazine), read her poetry at open mic night at The Tattered Cover (Colorado's largest independent bookstore), and read stories to children at a smaller independent bookstore.