

## I Catch Michelle Eating Dried Figs

I catch Michelle eating dried figs in the kitchen, and I  
make a face at her and say figs are gross and dried

figs are even more gross, and she says I'm crazy and she loves  
eating figs—I love splitting them down the middle—and she

uses her hands to show me. Then she tells me a story

about her family spending a couple of days every year  
with her uncle who lived right next to the factory  
her father worked at when he was younger, next to an orchard  
of fig trees. Her father used to bring back bags full  
of figs, and they would eat them together. And afterwards she would  
sneak into the orchard for more figs even though her father  
caught her once and scolded her about it and told  
her she'd get in trouble. She leans against our dirty  
fridge, staring out beyond me, beyond our shitty, crumbling  
kitchen, imagining the rows of trees, the summer heat.

I know

a lot about figs—that they are the only fruit  
that ripens on the tree, that they contain  
a natural humectant used to keep  
baked goods fresh, that another chemical  
in them has been used to treat pigmentation  
diseases, that Jesus Christ got pissed  
at them once, and that they are not really  
a fruit but a flower inverted into itself,  
the seeds

inside being the real fruit. I look at Michelle, see how tired  
she is because she had to take a second job assembling

sprinklers at a factory because we need the money  
for her father's funeral and because she wants to save

for a used truck and because we need the money. Tell me again  
how you like to eat figs, I say—and she smiles and raises her arms, extends

her hands towards me, her thumbs digging into the imaginary  
fruit, ripping the belly open, splitting it in half, the skin,  
the meat, juice dripping down her fingers and wrists.