

ERIN JOHNSON

## Something Like That

All my life, they have silenced me.  
Brought me up on knee-length skirts,  
kept me quiet under opaque shirts,  
just in case  
anyone saw a glimpse  
of what they think is theirs.

On the street,  
I walk.  
Head down,  
face creased with that  
undesirable frown  
known to ward off any wandering eyes,  
the mouths that spit sweet little lies  
about how their bad day warrants an invaluable prize.

At school,  
I know my place.  
While Shakespeare writes  
that *there's daggers in men's smiles*,  
I tread intellectual water for miles,  
exams start to feel like  
validity trials.

I have always been a  
*good girl*:

high grades, neat hair,  
low aspirations and conscious of what I wear.  
I've done it all right,  
ticked every expectation,  
yet I am still here  
*crying*  
and seeking an explanation.

Because

what happens  
when something like that  
happens to  
someone like me?

Am I the exception?  
Or am I the trend?  
If you look away,  
you'll never see how the truth can bend,  
how it twists and breaks a woman  
in a way you can't mend.

Some days it feels impossible to wade  
through a world where it seems I am destined to fade.

I have played by the rulebook  
but the rules are man-made.