



ETRUSCAN PRESS/WILKES UNIVERSITY

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RONNIE
STEPHENS

Judged by Etruscan author
Myrna Stone

WHAT I KNOW NOW

The first time around
I got caught up in the magic,
the parallel universes of science
and birth, the act of creation.

With you it was less hallelujah
and more hellfire, but I wouldn't
trade a single midnight snack run
for all the newness in the world.

You brought the pain, the swollen
lung and dislocated rib, the bulge
of baby head on hip. You brought
a sun to this galaxy heart, and it's true

that I still have not learned to look
upon him without watering the blown
glass beneath my brow. I have no clue
what to do with a boy. Yet here you are

on your third night without sleep
or shower, spit up in your hair, breasts
heavy and bruised from his gums,
whole body leaning into his fifth feeding

with everything I know of grace.
Your strong hands brace his back
and bobbing head like a Texas skyline
ready to carry whatever storm may break.

The first time around I mistook chance
for magic, got lost in the majesty
of an uncharted night. What I know now
is that there is no trick to the inception

of motherhood. It is messy and loud
and unstable. It is hungry all hours,
never sleeps, barks at the moon
and the stars for shining too bright

some nights. Motherhood is building
the whole goddamn solar system
just to make sure the sun
never feels anything
but centered
inside it.

“Nothing attested,
everything sung”
H. L. Hix