

Cheryl Boyce-Taylor

BORSCHT



My mother learned to make sour martinis
to make perfectly round matzo balls

to lug the heavy Kirby vacuum cleaner
from basement to third floor

learned to make borscht every Friday
beets turning her fingers muddy bourbon

she learned to swallow the slimy fluid
thick and red as her monthlies

my mother learned to swallow hard
when the small boy she washed and waxed said

*Genie, after you bathe me
go wash and scrub your skin*

*it looks so dirty
and I want you to be clean and white like me.*