

## Self-Portrait in Which I Fail to Hide My Daddy Issues from Google

*Allie Spikes*

I'm no Mormon but ask Google, *can you take the Mormon out of a once-Mormon?* I'm Mormon. Former stay-at-home Mormon mom. A non-drinker

newly in love with drunk texting,  
in love with drunk sighing,  
whose newest career is to act

sober. My coffee press  
taunts me from the counter; and  
I ask Google whether someone can

be both mother and drinker  
of coffee and wine, eater  
of attention and gaze. Champion

of vacuity. Unreasonable. Seeker of comfort and  
cow pasture, swirling wind, and the twitch  
of horse muscle under thigh,

purple alfalfa flowers, hail-green sky.  
The just-right pressure of nebulizer  
mask on my mouth, the rough edge of graphite-

covered callus. In response, Google only offers tips  
for alcoholic parents, which I might have offered my dad  
or sneakily saved as his homepage

had we known Google a million years ago. He hates  
Mormons and loves whiskey. I can't understand how  
he feels about me. As a matter of slang,

his god complex seems to reign over  
the words we exchange. I still remember  
how to play the good girl—to be quiet and still

while he checks a thousand bales—  
Google reminds me that hay  
should be baled at less than 18%

moisture to avert mold. Mom says dad didn't want me  
or my five siblings. Does he disremember that I once rode  
that walkable mile? With my thumb smashed in the pickup door

of his dusty vanilla cab, under the headache rack  
down a rocky mountain road holding a chain-stringer of  
gawking trout, sucking silent tears, the smell of salmon eggs and

cheese through pilled purple sweatshirt until  
he shifted to park so I could disappear, in the silver light  
of quaking aspens, thumb in mouth. I ask Google why

this poem keeps getting taken over by my dad. On this, Google  
gives bad fucking advice dressed in last season's  
platitudes from a sleepy suburban mall. The kind a minivan-

driving Mormon mom might buy, overripe, in Goodwill  
two towns away, during a late-spring sun shower  
the night before the Sabbath. I ask Google, *can children*

*survive a split-religion household?* Even Google  
predictably defers to  
Mormon authority on why religious

compatibility matters—my “enter” key depressed  
only four short decades too late for my parents  
who might’ve but definitely didn’t

think twice about twenty-two years, or 1,144 afternoons  
strangled by Sunday fights, that were anything but  
confined to the Sabbath, like that one afternoon

when dad snuck me to the car to see *My Best Friend’s Wedding*,  
a Sunday Matinee, at the other end of the Kansas highway  
against mom’s conviction in the words of an old prophet man

who would frown at my nose ring and tattoo,  
demand repentance for my Sunday shopping ritual.  
Or that Sunday afternoon dad took me to the farm to ride,

it was the time mom said that mouth full of dirt  
and Red’s hoof-shaped gash on my bruised thigh  
should be understood as a warning, not to break

the Sabbath again, or like those post-divorce  
Sundays, after banishing dad from my life—  
God’s will, mom said—for a solid

780 Sabbath days—those dadless Sundays I  
broke the Sabbath anyway for nothing  
more than a forty-fucking-2-cent pop

from a McDonald's drive-thru where I wanted God  
to wear a grease-stained headset and a faded,  
too-big polo, where I wanted God to scrub the shit

out of the toilets and look into my eyes and apologize  
for serving me Diet Coke instead of Coke,  
for offering me ketchup instead of love.