

Toni's Song

Paul Swenson

She prays in the shower, lifts
her face to the streaming water
god, to the shining metallic head

that resembles the flower of sun
in God's garden. We saw that image
together in a painting, projected

in the dark. Later, I noticed that
same, immense sunflower growing
behind a fence, its effulgent rays

arcing onto red Toyotas and yellow
Mazdas in a pancake house parking
lot. Dalmatian seat covers that

distinguish her little white car
yelped to me before I saw her face
behind the wheel one morning. She

squealed unexpectedly to the curb
at Kinko's, tow-headed son in tow.
Showed me a hint of that freedom

we felt the night that Lifespring's
living waters ran a little slow and
we escaped together. "I have to go,"

she said, passing the guard at the
door, "and he (meaning me) has to
go with me." She changed in the

ladies' room, then zoomed us to
Sugarhouse, where I watched her
seduce a birthday boy and guests

with her Rent-a-Craze show. One
noon, dressed to the nines as
a cop, she popped into my office

for lunch, tripped on a stair,
and prostrated herself at the feet
of the receptionist. We made an

inauspicious exit and dined nine
stories up at Nino's. It's not so
odd as powerful that she swims

the breaststroke in the Mormon main-
stream. Prays in the shower, lifts
her face to the streaming water god.