**Thin Line by Ivori Holson**

One

Two

Shhh she’s counting

Ariel runs

Tiny legs, running across pavement

Her chubby fingers

Barely able to grasp her daily Pepsi, she runs

Poison in hand

Smile on face

Brown eyes

Wildly looking for hiding spots

Three

Ariel stops

She takes a sip

She’s already drank 1,460 Pepsis in her lifetime

She’s five

She runs, inhaling deeply as her lungs try to catch up with her feet

Kayla’s 35

Four, Five

She counts the lights hanging from the hospital ceiling

As the doctors rush her to surgery

They flicker above her as she tries to remember every memory she’s ever had

Involving her feet

But her mind won’t let her wander from this moment

This second

This flicker of lights

This hushed whisper

This last moment she’ll have with her feet

She blames it on the diabetes

As if this disease had a mind of it’s own

Doctors blame it on the 12,410 Pepsis she’s been drinking since childhood

Little Ariel can barely spell

She’s six

And knows nothing about fructose or dextrin but

Neither does Kayla

Beaten, live in broken homes

She keeps trying to find pieces of herself at the end of that bottle

Ariel only knows the sizzle of bubbles

The ache she feels in her tummy

The big words doctors use to describe her condition

To tell her mom that her kidneys are failing and her blood sugar is too high

The pain she feels that Mommy can’t fix

Because Mommy’s been surviving off top ramen and soda

Because Mommy can barely afford to live

Kayla sits back in her wheelchair

Trying to look over her stomach

But she can’t

She can’t see the stumps,

The spaces where her feet used to be

She can’t see herself

When she looks at the reflection staring back at her

Just the person she’s turned into

But she can’t stop

Bottle after bottle

She can’t stop

Six

Seven

When Ariel turns 7

They found her

Dying

Behind overstuffed teddy bears and inflated balloons

It was her birthday

Eight

Nine

I’ve heard death before

But I swear there’s something foreign about the way it creeps through the lips of a seven year old

Ten

Every ten seconds,

Someone dies from diabetes

And in the time it’s taken for me to recite this poem

15 people have died