The Third Noble Truth
By: Michael Sowder

Sure-footed, one,
you run with the topo
lifted from the open car door.
Laughing down the street
you think you’re the new
Jesse James.

But clutching your booty too tightly—
map of Mt. Naomi, veined as any heart—
no hands to catch yourself,
your face hits the sidewalk. Then, O.
the blood, the tears,
the holding.
It takes time to learn
how to break a fall by letting go
of what you want.

From “Sex Education”
By: Jennifer Sinor

If she had to describe her first intimate experience, she would say she was twenty-five and newly divorced. A bus ride to the airport with her closest friend, his presence in her life one of the few gifts her ex-husband had ever given her. Tears muddied her vision as they drove past buildings and bus stops and stores ready to close for the night. She had moved from her parents’ house, to a sorority, to her husband’s bed. She knew nothing about living alone.

The blocks clicked by outside the bus, the sun’s light turning gold, and her friend reached over and held her hand. They didn’t say a word. He was gay, and though she could have loved him as a lover, she was happy to love him as a friend. They rode hand in hand the entire way, and, for months afterward, she could still feel his warm palm in her own.

Though maybe if she were honest she could recall other intimacies—the time she lay her head in her mother’s lap at the age of eighteen, in LAX, waiting for the plane that would take her to college, the night her youngest brother crawled into her lap at the movie theater because he was scared, a hug from a friend she hadn’t seen in years. Touch is what binds these moments together, skin against skin, the transfer of heat, being ushered into the present moment and held there by another’s body.