How to Love the World
Leah Alsaker

They will call you naïve, you with your soft doe-eyed wonder.
Be doe-eyed anyway.
Make a career out of it.
Throw your best smile at the woman eating gummi bears at the bus stop,
collect memories like flowers pressed between the pages of a book,
let your joy bubble as brightly as a child’s lava lamp. Do not despair. There will be nights when you lay awake (as those in unrequited love do) watching your alarm clock flicker, running your fingers over the scars spider-webbed across your arm.
The memories groan with voices like blood.
Try not to listen. Trace prayers on your worry beads or memorize the cracks in the ceiling.

If it helps, think about sporks.
(little longnecked halflings with tines like the legs of an infant giraffe)
and the other beloved things—red velvet cake from your sister’s birthday, teacup chihuahuas, streetlights that glow like starlight hung on a shepherd’s hook.

And when that fails, count your breaths until the morning comes wander outside as the world wakes take out your journal, pick a nearby thistle, press another memory between the pages.