

Artifacts

The first time I asked my husband if he loved Nina he said no. He was wiping down the counters with a thoroughness he'd brought from another country, where the threat of ants was constant, unrelenting. The second time—I forget where we were, driving in a car maybe—he said yes. He loved Nina, but he wasn't in love. The third time it was July and we were sitting on the porch. *Yes*, my husband said, shy but happy, *I'm in love with her*. Last light caught in the slats of the trellis, in thyme's little purple flowers. It hurt, but only the way it hurt when, the day before, you fastened the clothespin to my nipple. *Do you want me to take it off?* you'd asked and I said, *No. Leave it*. An intake of breath, artifact of another time and place, when we washed our shirts on a washboard until they frayed.