

Buttercream

by J.D. Isip

after she had worked her way through the Avon catalogue –
each of us acquiring a dozen flavored lip gloss tubes,
bottles of bubble gum bubble bath, scented candles
we'd light up over the sink (just in case)
black cherry kissing our hands
losing ourselves when it was okay –
she took a Wilton's class downtown on cakes

cross shaped and rabbit shaped and Easter egg oval
silver pans with convenient holes inviting the purchaser
to display them like trophies of culinary feats
artistic prowess never reached
in their splendid, dust-covered perfection
all gathered in enormous bags, put on layaway
to dream of being useful and providing

she flipped through photo albums
at the panadería – birthday cakes with plastic Smurfs,
tiny babies and storks, Mickey Mouse with off colors,
wedding cakes trying to outdo one another
like the dresses in the shop next-door
where Sylvia, the seamstress, told her
she looked like she could sew

she believed she could... or would
and poured herself, and, sometimes, the entire
check from Welfare, into the towers
of garish white cakes that climbed and climbed
to the PVC couples that always outlasted
some sailor who bought us ice cream
but never promised to do it again

one stick of soft butter, sugar, a little milk, mix
whatever flavor that fits, whatever color is left
my arm mimicking hers – the luxury of a mixer
I can afford now, but I like the motion
circles I can control
fist tight and sure, around and around
sweetness to cover any damn thing you please