

"Mosquitoes" by Aimee Nezhukumatathil

When my father wanted to point out galaxies
or Andromeda or the Seven Sisters, I'd complain
of the huzz of mosquitoes, or of the yawning
moon-quiet in that slow, summer air. All I wanted

was to go inside into our cooled house and watch TV
or paint my nails. What does a fifteen year-old girl know
of patience? What does a girl know of the steady turn
of a telescope dial until whole moon valleys crest

into focus? Standing there in our driveway with him,
I smacked my legs, my arms, and my face so hard
while I waited for him to find whatever small pinhole
of light he wanted me to see. At night, when I washed

my face, I'd find bursts of blood and dried bodies
slapped into my skin. Complaints at breakfast about
how I'd never do it again, how I have more homework
now, Dad, how I can't go to school with bites all over

my face anymore. But now I hardly ever
say no to him. He has plans to go star-gazing
with his grandson and for once I don't protest.
He has plans. I know one day he won't ask me,

won't be there to show me the rings of Saturn
glow gold through the eyepiece. He won't be there
to show me how the moons of Jupiter dance
if you catch them on a clear night. I know

one day I will look up into the night sky
searching, searching—I know mosquitoes
will have their way with me
and my father won't hear me complain.