



Image: "The Kitchen Goddess" by JoAnne Tucker. "Joy" was written by Melissa Madenski for *Rattle's* Ekphrastic Challenge, February 2023, and selected as the Editor's Choice.

# JOY

poem by Melissa Madenski

I used to say I felt like I was  
running to catch a train,  
a toddler in one arm, our boy  
hanging on to my jacket.

I used to say we ran on marbles  
reaching for the train handle  
in the days after my husband's  
sudden death. Our boy would say,

*You're holding my hand too tight,  
it hurts.* I wouldn't allow  
our daughter's feet to touch ground.  
Anything could happen.

Then, one day, at the kitchen window,  
I looked out and watched our children  
play baseball with spruce cones and sticks,  
the dog leaping and twisting as cheerleader.

And I mean this. They shone.  
Shrubs behind them dropped glitter.  
The air bristled with light.  
The brilliant forest throbbed.

And it lasted.  
And we danced away  
from that train.