

When my mother was born, she was already carrying the egg that would become me

I was there when she made
mud pies, earned the nickname

Tilly the Toiler on her grandparents'
farm. I was there the first time

she touched a horse, the pink
of its nose soft under her hand.

I was there when she was
on homecoming court. Wore

the paisley dress. When she wrote
the poem about how she felt

she was playing a role, that no one
really knew her. There when she drove

her friend to the abortion clinic.

I was there when her father told her

to be a nurse. There the first time
she held the hand of a patient who was

dying. I was there when she kissed my father
under the magnolia tree, her lace gown pooled

around her feet – there when they lost
the first baby. And the second,

and the third. And before she was
Mother. Wife. Before I wrote

the poems, I was there, and I still
didn't see her.