I am eight years old.
The tv is blaring a violent war movie from the living room.
He yells, "grab me another, will ya?"
An opening of the fridge, a tilting of the glass,
Number four.
It is ten in the morning.

I am ten years old.
Smoke swirls around him, angry eyes finding mine through the window
"Make me a coke."
A popping of a can, a pouring of the jack.
I am not allowed to have coke.
Number ten.
It is eight in the morning.

I am thirteen years old.
Hand on my thigh, face too close.
I am uncomfortable.
"You'll always be my little girl, right?"
A demand, not a question; I nod.
I go to the kitchen to make breakfast.
Two pop tarts left. I will not eat this morning.
I am hungry.
But I have to feed the boy.
One more coke.
Number...
It is six in the morning.

I am sixteen years old.
I have learned to count the beer cans in the trash,
The dishes in the sink,
The loads of laundry I will have to do.
I have learned to count how long he holds my knee, my thigh, my back,
too low.
I have learned to count the hours, how long before my brother is asleep.
I have learned to count how many days apart we are,
How many days I get to hold my mom,
How many days I get three meals,
How many days I do not smell alcohol,
How many days I do not have to lie for you- about you.
I have been counting my whole life, and never once
Have you counted.
1,373 days,
And I do not count on you to return.
I hope to never count again.