

“climbing”

Lucille Clifton

a woman precedes me up the long rope.
her dangling braids the color of rain.
maybe i should have had braids.
maybe i should have kept the body i started,
slim and possible as a boy's bone.
maybe i should have wanted less.
maybe i should have ignored the bowl in me
burning to be filled.
maybe i should have wanted less.
the woman passes the notch in the rope
marked Sixty. I rise toward it, struggling,
hand over hungry hand.