

PATERNOSTER

The word for a line with a series of hooks also means the recitation of a
prayer,
but in our case, a paternoster is shaped by the weight it holds at its end.

The leader and the link are determined by the shyness of the bite.
Reeling it toward you piques the bait.

Move closer. I want to tell you a story. It has its blood knots, its changing
water,
the usual lures: family, violence, a margin left bare for interpretive remark.

It's not easy, even with this sinker, to go below the surface.
To ask you to offer me your open throat.

I'll start with the thing dragged up: the body of my sister.
I'll give you the location: the tracks.

The red treble designed to mock blood, to stick into the skin: one suspect—
our father—

Put this begging in your mouth, a decade of loaded beads.

FIRST MYSTERY OF MY SISTER

He unleashed the dog and waited, plastic bag in hand.
Sparky barked, nosed along the tracks

into the no-man's-property between station, line, and road.
Commuters numbed against the windows watched the nodding thistle

shiver as the 6:42 lunged toward the city. Overgrowth, long fingers
of grass, the bud of a dull tattoo—what remains—

her tagged body,
the dog at dawn sniffing a greening rose.

AFTER THE TELLING

The conversation turns to paper
tapering at the edge

of the wall, the details of the interior.
You've put your hand

through my body and are caught
in the rack of vines

I've descended into.

You want to know what was left
for weeks in the weeds:

the trauma to the head,
the naked waist, my sister.

You ask whether the violence was domestic
and I tell you that an animal

nudged the bones, that afterwards,
someone put the dog to sleep.

I offer this as resolution. We turn again
to the space,

the crown molding, the framed faces.

LAST CALL

Come get me. A father in his nightshirt, a daughter on the end of the line calling for a pickup.

A father in his nightshirt, in his stick shift, switches gears; the pickup pulls up to the train station.

His stick shift switches gears. She's not there; he pulls up to the train station
bar, the cigarette machine, payphone.

She's not there; he drops change at the bar, the cigarette machine, payphone.
In the freight yard, a body

drops. Change crosses over a face in the freight yard. A body's last words

cross over a face: a daughter at the end of the line calling last words, *come get me.*