

THE SILO

Who keeps your secrets
now?—now that the grain you kept
to feed the winter herd
is gone, the cows long gone
from the stalls where not even
their ghosts shift in the cold-
sealed dim and imagine
pasture. The metal rungs
that climb your side start
halfway up and hang useless,
now that you are made
of silence, of cinderblocks
encircling air. Who calls
the sparrows to cling
to the rim of you, and trace
their momentary outlines
against the flux of sky?
Do you know that sometimes
I hear my lover in another
room, and think for a moment
he is the one I told myself
I loved before, the one
who—? Little engine
of the mind stuttering, little
needle skipping against
the record's black disc
where it hits the scratched
place, the damage—before
someone lifts the player's arm
and shifts it so the song
can go on. Please tell me
you remember the time my new love

and I found our way
through the wrecked barn's
understory, and unbolted
the door that led to you.
We could finally see inside
to where animal skeletons
gleamed in the circle of grass
at your base—not, of course,
the cows, but wild things
trapped, unable to scale
your steep sides to the mute
O far above, the open mouth
muffled by cloud. Who could
tell us how the animals came
to die there, fell or strayed
into something finished? Who
could give us the story we thought
we wanted to hear? And which one
of us thought to call you
ruined then, which one
to name you almost beautiful?

You wanted to live forever
inside the book of flowers.
Peony foxglove geranium rose, each
single pink startled and shone there.
And the salmon-walled houses on the island
where you were child: you rode
your bike past their blushes.
Pink of thrum and pulse, rouge
and fuchsia. Pink of touch-me-there.
Mornings in the unheated pool,
blood rushing the surface
of skin. Pink of just-beneath.
Of knuckle and cheek, secret
pink behind the knee. Pink
encircled you, called with its rough
cat's tongue. Instead you hid.
Girl-not-girl, dressed in dull
navy blue, drab green, envying
the deer that turns the color
of the forest it enters.
Color of November and vanishment.
But what silks the palm
like rose petals. What glides
and tarries so. You came late
to pink, though pink was always
here. The one who holds
your face in both hands. The one
who says I see you. Nothing silks so.
Pink of *oh*. Pink of see-me.
Of labia and lip, of welts
raised by poison ivy on the tender
inlet of wrist. Who kissed

you in woods where the deer
keep their secrets. Who holds.
Pink of wound between
the sutures. Pink
of live. See? You are
where you wanted
to be. Alive
inside. Here,
your book of flowers.

BRIAR ROSE

For years, you called it
by the wrong name: the story

named for the girl, herself named
for the hedge of blossom and thorn

that binds her and keeps her
safe. Petals interrupting

the thicketed pelt of green.
How easy, then, to be

mistaken. To be so lost
and somehow found. In the story, the girl

barely sees the needle, fevered silver
that abandons her to a century

of sleep. But she was never
called Beauty. In the story when

she wakes, the story
is over, and so everything

can begin.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF SILK

I gave the yellow skirt away
and now some other woman wears it.
This mild February day
my body longs for spring.
But I remember the skirt
was heavy, made for winter,
its color not of pollen
but closer to the streetlamp
that comes on just before
night arrives entirely,
when another life,
in its wholeness,
offers itself to be seen.

THE TREES

Look up this time
to where (there is

a word for this) their
leafless branches parcel sky

into pieces small enough
to hold What is it

you have asked
to stay birds unfurling

their briefest gestures above you
their shapes clarified

as things are before dark
In a book in another language

there is a word for the way
you must make shards

of your longing which was
already broken and thus

complete The birds
move smaller until

they are still inside you
until they sleep

THE GIRL WITH NO HANDS

eats the pear with only
her mouth, steps close

to the brimming tree & takes
the fruit with lips & teeth,

her maimed arms tied
behind her back. Later

in the story she will
marry, later still be parted

from her love. But now
she steps toward the tree as if

to enter it, as if the tree
were gate or door or

her own unharmed body
somehow kept whole. I know

there is a story inside
this story, one I cannot

read. A story inside the tree
the girl presses her entire

handless body into,
as if she might become

that leafy other. First time
you stepped your body

into mine: crickets, streetlights,
the nocturnal city

breathing. Before then,
before I knew you, I touched you

with the girl's lost hands, the gone-hands
hidden inside my own. Before

the pear, the tree, the girl
walked & walked, she slept

in a thicket from which she
crept at dawn. For so

long, the story was
about hunger, as maybe

most stories are. I press
the side of my face against

the space between
your shoulder blades. Did I say

at the end the girl's hands
grow back? Did I tell you

it is summer?—& the girl
is ravenous, & the tree

is green as never, or always.

DROUGHT

The grass doesn't save it,
the earth doesn't: the moisture
finally arrived from the sky
giving itself
back to itself, returning
the dust-colored hills
to green. This
is what stuns me: the one
small rain that appeared
and vanished
two days ago has
proved enough to press,
from fissured ground, so many
slender wildflowers whose names
I can't recall, flickering
like the words of the friend
I follow along the red-dirt whip
of trail, the ones I breathe
into some damp, imagined organ
where I try to make them mean
against the day that says
forget, forget.
Passing the reservoir, we see
the line where, in other, lush
years, the water reached, high
on its dry concrete side.
We watch and the parched
hills don't watch back,
too intent on their desire
to bloom themselves
into oblivion. What do I do
with this nameless sadness

I must have watered
just enough:
never quite flowering
nor ever sufficiently tindery
to set alight.