Forsythia Nervosa

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# Table of Contents

## I

- Serifs and Stems 1
- Measurement 2
- First 3
- Complete Hysterectomy 4
- Study of Carpet and Skin 5
- Smile For Me 7
- The Body Politic 8
- Danzig in the Park 9
- No Trespassing 10
- I Wore These Boots 11
- At the Longbranch Saloon 13
- Nervosa 14

## II

- At Dusk 17
- The First Flood 18
- Because my Mother is a Gardener 19
- My Father’s Piano 20
- Springbrook Hospital 21
- The King Vanishes 22
- 27 Club 23
- Fluency 24
- Thin Enough 25
- Strand 26
- No Pennies in my Charm Bag 27
- Leaseholder 29
- The Couple Upstairs 30
- After Eurydice 31
- What the Dawn Broke 32

## III

- Your Alchemy 34
- This Between 35
- Paucity 36
- My Sister’s Sistine 37
- Reunion 38
Angel Trumpets 39
Bat’s Blood Ink 40
Birth of the Peacock 41
Our Snowstorm 42
Speeding Into 43
Memory 44
Between Syllables 45
Serifs and Stems

I hate the sound of my own voice,
the way it spills out.
My tongue wilts when it flowers,
so I write down the word hyacinth--
I like the way my eyes bloom
around the letters,
I don’t have to show my teeth
to taste the typed petals.

The elegant shape
of the flower and the word
is what I want to be –
ornamental, that lovely y,
a pale, empty womb, a stamen
sucked by a buzzing dash
of yellow then devoured.

Someone else’s belly would be full
of my crushed ovarian powder,
dust ripening into honey
in some distant, precise geometry.
I’d be book-ended by h and h, contained.

The heavy bee pulls the powder out
but the petals are still and stately,
no sound or weeping when he flies off.
Measurement

takes up too much space
balloons up to fit anywhere

devours the flora inside
disrupts my ecology when I undress

sits cross-legged on my mattress
blows smoke in my face
sucks slim cigs
that burn without shrinking

tarts itself with promises,
jeweled & radiant,
says, just run yourself out of your body

wet mouth warm with empty

wipes rouge off its pock marks
crawls into my chest
says, slip through your own fingers

shows me the slink-spined femme fatale
I thought I’d be if I turned inside out

vamp with vomit-stained
bee-sting lips & small shadow

preens its peacock plumage made of lack
winces in the mirror
screams on the scale

tangle of petals twisting up
irregular after my fallout
winding around the stiletto heel trellis

at the end of the pin legs
I promise myself when I’m full
matchstick legs, still unshaven for another year,
parting in my grandparent's spare room,
generative sparks pulling, gravity-like, under silent
shush of cicadas. Florida nights turned
hotter with age and appraisal, finding the shadow
silhouettes of the year before held no terror
now, just hiding places. Covers cover all but flushed
face, still round with newness and uncertainty. Even
amongst the snores of family I found reason for the dark,
magnets to the stillness that then, and now, let me pick
apart the cinematic nakedness of my mind's creation
and give it weight, give it my fingers, give it my body.
Each midnight crept into my tongue and kept
my focus fixed on the easing down, the moment
when all my body-- with its pot bellied
impudence -- was a singularity, beginning
and ending with the hands, the breath, the root.
Complete Hysterectomy

her seat tipped back, her mother
grips her female urinal plastic and indiscreet
like a fetish--
ified beneath her her womb now null
finds moments short skirt, she
passing in which to between the semi trucks
piss -- *fuck it, I don't* lift the fabric and
care who sees
*anymore.* My father looks ahead and
listens to the splashing. Her surgery scar
marks the ending of my beginning. Her
cleft belly grins at the removal of
what once was my swaddling cloth.
No blood to stain her months anymore,
no life humming in what is now a chasm.
But I - I am in the back seat, pelvis thrumming
for the first time. Her womanhood diffuses
into mine - she fallows and I flourish. She
empties her insides and I scoop them up.
Study of Carpet and Skin

With my cheek to the floor, the room blurred, the way a mouth on canvas is a shadowed gash

until distance reveals the screaming face. The carpet rubbed my knees until they burst

and turned red as the wine I drank, red as my face when he snapped my hair back and breathed

this is so much sexier with you crying like that. My knees scabbed over, each cap

a Titian. The next morning, in our class I sat tertiary, scribbling on my notes as if memory can be painted over. That night, I came to his door on steady feet and pushed my own face to the carpet. To highlight the foreground, you must position the light source carefully behind the object, but do not render the lamp. I unfolded my triptych and painted a new panel where the bitch wanted it all along, blended the murk of his voice when he said I knew you’d come back into the soft blur of a Turner. I drank wine again, thinking I could coax my own desire. Perhaps I could gloss over the dry dark with wet layers until it became blued with distance and atmospheric perspective, or drop light into my memory like the glinted whiteness within a painted pupil. Flesh is the hardest tone to imitate. The hands on my throat were smudges, Seurat’s afternoon in the park bloomed in the pointillism across his knuckles. The air fleeing my lungs changed my palette to Rembrandt’s chiaroscuro. You can paint over every stroke, but the canvas still hangs, so I shaded
my mouth with what I thought sounded like pleasure, pretended that I never resisted as he glazed
me on the carpet, that I had never begged him to stop.
Smile For Me

There’s violence between my stocking
clad legs. I am public space on the sidewalk,

my footfalls invite riots. No one sees the blood,
but like sharks, they turn lazy circles. It’s not desire,

but hunger, the unblinking eye-glint as they scan
for a mouthful, that fuels the first "hey bitch, turn

around" and it’s hunger that fuels "keep walking,
bitch, I wouldn'tfuck you anyway." I wonder

if they named it catcalling as a play on the word
pussy, both cunt and fear.

I walk on matchstick heels, faster
now, but I want to turn this whole body around

bloody fisted, rip the plug from the root,
fling the grenade into the shark-infested

street corner and watch it explode.
The Body Politic

As a man I'd find thighs to divide
and conquer, trailing my signature
in saliva and semen— as myself I wield
breasts like pale, veined weapons
above an amorphous waist, pinched
by a marred corset of skin. I once
wanted to turn phallic so I could hold
my sex like a second self. Now,
I dismantle stares with this violent
fissure of cleavage and tumble towering
forms with impossibly broad hips.
The guttural language of everything
is contained in the morse code
pulsing between my thighs.
Danzig in the Park

We kissed the words of old punk songs
into the streetlit sky, jean-covered legs
kicking our bodies higher against the clack
of old chains and weathered swing seats.
Laura soared farther than I could—her 5-foot stature
broke the cool air with the same intensity
as when she was planted on the ground.
I never knew why looking down at the top
of her head from eight inches up could
make me feel so small. I took the lead for Danzig
that night, howling like only a once-shy fifteen
year old girl could, drunk on courage
and hurtling through the air on a dew-
smitten lawn just beyond a prison wall.
Who would put a park right next to a prison,
she asked as we passed each other in mid-arc—
and the sound of rattling swing chains
was my reply. How can any girl sing as deep
as Danzig, she asked—and the raucous bellow
from my throat was my answer. She took charge
when it was Joey Ramone’s turn, but sailed past
his voice and into her own. Her raspy smoker’s
screech filled the blank and left me to chime
in whenever the sound needed rounding. Behind
our backs, looming closer, then farther as we pushed
and retreated, inmates panted onto the thick
windows of their cells and painted love notes
with their fingers on the clouds they had made.
They couldn’t hear our songs through the glass—
but in the absence of the moon and the brilliance
of the park’s lamplight, they saw two black-clad
girls swing through the air, mouths open to spoil
the stillness—one voice giddy and borrowed,
the other as natural and steadfast as the dark.
No Trespassing

I ignore the signs outside Sunnyland Hospital. *Condemned. Danger. Asbestos.*
My boots snag on the fence,

adding scuffs like the ones from other fences,
next to the glass-made holes in the heels.
I feel like the tough one, first to enter

a place ripe with rumors, with two girls
whose boot toes are smooth as their ironed hair.
I laugh when they trail behind.

Concrete walls absorb our flashlight beams.
*I hear they used to shock kids in water*
*if they banged their heads or spat their pills.*

I recite the graffiti: *Joe died here*
I read the ripped charts: *14, male*
I don’t say: our age

*People say you can still*
*hear wheelchairs and screaming.*
I don’t admit I thought I heard

whispers in a creole the living don’t speak.
Black water fills the elevator shaft
and ripples without a breeze. In the hall --

a hospital bed heavy with damp, a rotten desk,
a coloring book open to a picture of a woman,
one purple crayon mark blurred across her cheek

like a bruise, but the rest is left blank.
None of us can bear to turn its pages.
Rusted crib bars hold a plush bear, squeezed

so tight its once-white insides burst and spill.
It sags with mold and drool. One black button eye is the only thing that shines.
I Wore These Boots

when I stepped on broken glass,
thumb tacks, railroad tracks
and joked with the other punk kids
that wherever we stood
was the wrong side – so we stomped

on each gravel rut beside the rusted lines
and infected both halves of the town
when I fell in love, each time, pick one--
or out – all those times too, when I felt like a badass,
or wanted to--I still do--

when I gave my first handjob, his fist closed
around mine to show me how to please
a man who was 27 and I was 16
and stuck on a park bench until
I could find a ride home

when I went to wash him off my hand
I was grateful none had spilled
on the unpolished leather
and when I ran from him through the greenway,
when he caught me, stripped me

and sucked me between my legs
and I thought about how I could kick him—
when I made a joke of it, braying at the punk kids
about his rotten breath and that awful
slurping sound when he made me come--

but I didn’t tell that part
I just told them about the sound and scuffed
my toes against the ground
when my meds didn’t work and they took me
away and it was the only time my mother ever cried

when I dented trash cans because I felt small
and bashed bricks to watch them crumble
when I broke into broken places
looking for something to break,
I hooked my steeled toes
into the holes of every wobbly fence
I climbed, and grinned at the summit
of each furious ascension
when I could look down at the world
for a moment before I jumped.
At the Longbranch Saloon

My black rimmed eyes and short skirts chimed
my desire while the punk boys laughed
and spat into cheap beer. They lanced

the air with their elbows before each boot tapped
its steel-tipped threat, like they had to cut
through the world to make room.

Their jello-tinted mohawks rose like clock towers,
ringing an invitation to any other
wire-boned punk kid who wanted
to make wounds in another’s arms without knowing
why. When the fists stopped, I let them rest
their bloody cheeks on my shoulders

because I wanted one of these split-lipped
menaces to soften when he touched me.
Nervosa

[Seven Years - Tasting]

Afternoons alone and the self-blending of
cold body and mirror made light bend again, past the
ghosts of an hour ago when I squatted by the trash:
strange creature -- eating Mom-made lunches, tearing
bread chunks with milk teeth and spitting soaked pieces
into the can. My back pressed coy against blue bedroom
walls -- no one must see the consumption or the rejection.
In the mirror my pale cheeks pull a grimace at the memory,
evidence of grim wanting and giddy undoing still stuck to
my tongue. I shiver at the strange, erotic thrill of tasting the
infinity of pleasure and never quite giving in.

[Seventeen - Purging]

I was a refugee under the bathroom light,
infreqently at first, just enough to keep a few
pounds at bay. I sang the size of my ugliness under
a fluorescent glow, water chattering behind me to
hide the symphony of becoming less than myself.
my Self is humming with need, my Self is turned inside out,
is painted green as bile and yellow as the bathroom light.
One morning the premonition of being caught
bloomed under the skin around my eyes, blood
vessels glaring angrily at everyone, wordlessly
begging: tell me I'm beautiful enough to stop this.

[Twenty Four - Gaining]

disconnected from the bones lately,
the stark and the rind all forgotten
for a comfort of cushioning -- unlike
before, when dark meant desire
and nothing could stop the undoing
of myself for thrills -- shape becomes
matter becomes faceless becomes time
passing and body shaming itself. Mirror
hunts angles, finds none. Nothing
consumptive in circularity this time. I’m
craving the empty satiety of being less.
[Twenty Seven - Starving]

This-- this nerve sings in my gut, its sharp
coloratura swelling inside my belly. No size
or shape could quiet the ecstasy of this shaking,
undone by consumption, reborn with each refusal.
Now I taste only Me, curling into this cavity. I
thought wasting would silence the wanting, but its
aria hisses as I hum with it, feasting on my shreds.
At Dusk

The girl hides in the tangled forsythia
that covers the tall wooden fence

while her mother murmurs
on the porch. The fallen yellow blossoms

are cool against her bare feet
unlike the lava on the living room rug.

She burned for hours,
too tired to leap to the sofa,

falling again and again into the stagnant
patterns on the worn molten carpet.

She cools her blisters in the thicket
beside the porch where her mother holds the phone

and says I have to go, don't call me here
he'll be home soon and when

her mother walks inside the volcano
and the porch is silent, the girl creeps

to the driveway and waits until her father's
headlights burn the dusk

and the fireflies erupt in the air.
The First Flood

After my sister fell asleep, her friend
let me flow behind her into the swamp
of the bathroom, where she slipped
out of her clothes and into her skin
and the steam inside me rose

she was nine and looked older
and I was six and tried to--
I don’t remember her eyes, her face--
I remember the brown mole on her pelvis
and the way mine swelled when I saw it

and how I didn’t know I had a marsh
inside me until she floated in
the soapy lagoon and I was humid
and everything inside me hummed

I don’t remember her last name--
I remember the way the pale islands
of her chest emerged from the wetness
and she let me look at her nipples
ripening in the dry air

and how I stared at her clamshell
mound with its four tawny, floating hairs
and how her folded bud of coral
peeked through the bivalve lips
when she folded her knees
up and soaped herself

and how I made waves in the water
with my hand and she smiled so softly
and how I whirlpooled my finger
toward her jutting pearl hipbone
but I stopped myself before I touched her.
Because my Mother is a Gardener

Sometimes I want to plunge my letter-chapped fingers into soil, soothing cracked cuticles with the hum of earth and stone. I would seek and never find the words that dwell deep beneath the ground, searching with dissolving fingers, so softened and musty that only time can tell the difference between my hands and the roots they caress.
My Father's Piano

He only plays
it when he waits,
the way people
jostle their keys
or clear their throats.
When he waits for my
mother to un-
tangle the dark knot
of her hair
and slip into her shoes,
he plays Bach--
the mad arithmetic
and intemperate tempo--
to oust her from
the bedroom
and into the car.
When he waits
for sleep
to acknowledge
him, his callused
fingers turn to Schubert.
After the wet dishes
have settled dripping
into the tray,
he strikes the keys
softer now, soft enough
to feel my sister
and me creeping
through the doorway.
Soft enough to notice
the way the air changes
when someone
is listening.
Springbrook Hospital

My Uncle draws the power lines with a ruler, but the silhouettes still seem to bend them.

The white paper is unlike the April sky that took its color from the pavement.

He sketches folded wings, says, remember? And I do. The drawings cover the blankness with feather and song the way the birds soared and blocked the sun’s shy light. He shades the paper lightly, because they were not black. Their darkness shimmered like water.

They flicked raindrops from iridescent wings. Each time the mass curled their talons around the cables, one voice startled the herd with a note, and the air darkened with the swarm as they glided to the wet tangle of pines where their wings blended with charcoal needles.

*The birds we saw that day were starlings,* he says. *Must have been thousands of them.*

The sketched bodies cling to stiff lines, they settle, and their wings look like rain.
The King Vanishes

No assassin slayed the ruler
inside my father’s skull,
or crossed the moat beneath the bridge
of his tongue. It didn’t pass

through the canal, but lay stillborn
in the chamber. He did not pass
from the world when the trigger
failed to slam his abdication

through his temple. When he exiled
himself to his bed, declared
my mother his successor,
she refused to kiss the ring,

but threw the gun into the garbage
and carried my sister and me
from our chambers and into
his. I don’t remember

what she screamed into his ears,
what parliament of relatives
she summoned on the phone,
but I recall the prickles

on my face when I first heard,
not his title, not Dad, but Martin.
I knew my father’s absence
before I learned his name.
The 27 Club

There was always the great after, the luminescent adolescent dream of yet unknown that I could lean into--body unformed, then undone, I would shamble into woman legs only when I could hold the eye, unfold the stare and internalize it, belly-up on a mattress to find the worth of my cheapness -- but how many nights will I remember only a screen and my silence? Now, missing the consumption, the great something of my time and the washing of sounds and touch -- the illusory that was strong enough to quake flesh and give color to the squalor. All my sounds are dulling to white noise--I miss the days when everything seemed brighter with the lights off--
Fluency

I grasp the meaning but lose
nuance  I’m functional--
I can ask for directions
without defining the wire that stretched bones
to level my tilted teeth. Verb forms, the way
to conjugate eye contact -- I’ve memorized
those, but can’t erase my accent
or straighten my syntax.
At 22, my tightlaced face
loosened, but my words still
come out crooked  skirting the angles
of my once-skewed jawline  rippled
never-kissed lips  the palm I used
to cover the mess when I laughed.
  I’m only fluent in the language
my mouth taught me  and idioms
  carry such connotative clutter.
I still mistranslate *hello* to mean

*smile for us  freak  open your mouth*
*without sound*  and I answer *fine*
  which translates roughly to *am I beautiful
enough to love yet?* in my native tongue.
Thin Enough

The word is willowy, but I won't sag the way a willow does, or weep. My branches, if I branch at all, will surge up like lightning into lightness – too hot and quick to capture. I will slip through everyone's arms, my cigarette body now vapor if desire sparks within me. I will wind myself tight, tighter. There's no end to shrinking inside. Some call it slim, but that hum shuts tight, so I'll shrink before any bear trap mouth can keep me inside it with a syllable and savor my bleached bones.

I love to chase the waning shadow. If my tongue still tastes, I will lick the light off my unused teeth.
Strand

I didn’t know flesh could feel like distance
until I touched departure in his skin. His breath
became muscular when I speared the air
with my voice again, did you fuck her?

He kept his murky eyes on the road and both hands
on the wheel. Then his head betrayed his silence
with a nod. The motion seized the yes out of his body
before his lips formed it. I remember the streetlights

and silence, the moment before I could speak,
but I can’t remember when I scratched the pearls
from my neck or when the car stopped
or how many times I told him to stop it before he did.
No Pennies in my Charm Bag

When you glide
into the white yawn of daybreak
and exit the crossroads,
you’re not supposed
to pour your fetid memories
and skin to the wind

and trudge beyond the first stir
of traffic with nothing
but a hole in your charm bag.

You’re supposed to pick something up
from the dust. Would any blues
strummer slam his shins

on the corner of Miccosukee and Magnolia,
soul blasphemed into a wick, only to leave
without music flaming in his fingers?

My grey bathwater caressed
the hot pavement, a slippery sigil.
I shredded an oil-soaked printout

of my ex-lover’s eyes with glass
fragments of a vigil candle
that dwindled for nine days,

and smashed a mason jar full of briny psalms
and spikes at the intersection, vowing
not to glance back till I shut

the front door against the sun.
I wondered should I be barefoot?
Will the rail-nail ritual

fester him if I crush the world
with my bunions, or with the shoes
I wore when he left?
But no devil ever came to me and said let me
  spit sooty riches on your hotfoot powder heart
   now that you’ve anointed the asphalt

with all that vinegar and sweat.
   You’re not supposed to enter the world
      with empty palms– the air was trembling

the way my mouth trembled
   when I breathed the blue dawn
      without him.
Leaseholder

The room is plain, and good.
No color or evidence of a body’s
ghosted imprint on the space.

Impudently pure carpet
fibers, yet un-ravished
by the inevitability of my wine glass

flex beneath my feet as I push
my single bed, frameless and small,
into the center of the room where

my curling signature -- a vestige of
my young desire for scripted opulence--
dictates I will sleep alone for the next year.

I am thinking about an imminent
regret now, about the way the walls
will be pock-marked with pictures

as I construct an epoch I’ll want
/not want to remember
There is no time to unbend here, no

real point in assaulting the drywall
with some evidence of my rest--
there is just the dusk’s trance at the window,

the perpetuity of looking ahead and behind,
and I’m alone and there is only time
for quiet and coffee and contrition.
The Couple Upstairs

Each dawn she gathers the rubble of clothes
    and broken plates that he hurricaned
into the hallway the night before
    while she waits for him to come home.

One night he shredded paper into vines
    cast them out the window
where they dripped and twisted in the breeze
    then slammed his suitcase shut.
He screamed too loud to notice
    the radiator pouring a river

from their lives into mine
    and loosening buds of plaster
that wilted and fell like sun-starved
    blossoms in a flood.

Each dawn, he finds that his desire
    and bleeding hands can’t splinter wood,
and his voice lowers to something like tenderness,
    pleading open the door, open the door.
After Eurydice

But the silence – there was music in that, he told me.
There were sounds in the moment of losing, he told me.

In the moment of that last smoked look she gave
him his last music and quiet is no muse. He told me

that the white lengths of my thighs reminded him of the pale
paths to Hades, where she turned to illusion. He told me

that the turning – the way he twisted away from me
and the life in my skin, was a kind of music. He told me

he needed the scrape of flesh going nowhere to be soundless.
She lived in dry silence. His lyre won’t sing a deluge, he told me,

because his head was cradled by the sea and he needed
no rain. He said, “Hades made me a bruise when he told me

that I had no melody strong enough to give rhythm to the squalor.”
Her farewell glance was so soft and confused, he told me.

The trees ripped and ripped him into silence, and he craved
departure. I knew he needed to lose me like her. He told me.
What the Dawn Broke

The forest and I fade into stillness
when the grey world wakes up.

I suck paper into pulp
and the one who left remembers himself
into my tongue and marrow

while I sit on the cracked tile floor
of a basement my back pulsing
against the dryer and wait

the wallpaper begins
to writhe the painted trees wake up
frost then lush then green then husks
seasons live and die to the rhythm

of the dryer cycle I hope the wall will live forever
no longer paper and paint
I want lightness burned inside me
this shiver this silver-cold breath

hours escape then dull light lines
march through the blinds I notice the dryer's silence

no more colored breath the walls
won't whisper.
Your Alchemy

It’s like the moment right before you fall asleep.
You know you’ll awaken to a too-bright room

and a too-dull self, aching to go back—
that moment when you peak, when what you swallowed

or snorted hours earlier becomes the Self.
It’s like summoning sulfur from a squalid furnace

inside you and shaping it into a soul made of gold
that you know will dissolve into sulfur again.

You miss the new Self before it’s gone, but still,
you stir yourself into the everywhere. The body bouquet

becomes indefinite— you name your nameless dream hues.
Not blue, but blue not red, but this

You try to hold onto this light, but you open
your mouth and the sun falls out.
This dusk, this inside without a between, 
is the sound of thorax mortar and wet pestle.

Keep crushing your stone into the basin 
of my brocade stretch marks and the scent

of our powder and pulp will darken, swelling 
to fill the holes in the air around us.
Paucity

A curved crest
    of rib emerged
    on the barrel
of my lover’s torso.

It gleams like a sand
dune & hovers
    above shadow
shifting with his breath.

No remains hum
    in the reliquary.
    The buttressed apse
of his dwindling core

    is a fresco
of our gutted pantry
our empty pockets,

his skin illuminates
    his bones
his bareness.
My Sister’s Sistine

She pulls her well-worn tarot cards across
the kitchen table. The heavens are watching
her find the best time to leave the place she adorned
with pasted gods. Above us, the pantheon

looms on her rented ceiling. One day, she stood
on a stepladder and laughed as I told her
she'd lose her deposit, she'd lose the money
for rent again, she'd lose the gods themselves

when the landlord threw her and her glue out,
but she pasted them still. She made a ramshackle
Sistine Chapel there on Park Avenue with paper
borders and faux Doric columns, the tops

cut from a styrofoam cooler that had chilled
her groceries when she hadn’t paid the electric bill.
From Cronus and Rhea lurking above the bookshelves
to Zeus sending lightning bolts across the kitchen's

threshold, she pasted them all. She covered their thrones
in faux gold leaf, an offering to these glued-on Old Master
figures in their painted sky that faded from yellow
dawn to black midnight. She strained her neck

varnishing them into permanence, splattering white stars
across the night and blending clouds into the day.
Beside the pantheon, she glued up the ones who tried
to touch them. Icarus tumbles from the ceiling fan

near Apollo's rays, and Daedalus watches in helpless shadow,
flying towards Diana's moon. She exalted the Gods
upon her ceiling, and when the pigments dried
and their eyes looked upon her, she looked away.
Reunion

Strange to watch a girl
whose breasts grew with mine
incanting to her belly
to comfort the earless thing
as if the embryo, the slick cave salamander, can feel vibration
through the wet cocoon
and know it’s Mozart.
Angel Trumpets

I watch from a tuk tuk as a child scales
piles of trash on the Delhi street,
holding one hand inside her sleeve,

and a white bird blocks out the sun
like in a dream I had when I was her age —
her hand is stiff and curled

like mine when I grasped pale
blossoms that shone like quartz
and dripped venom. My skin

shifted and shimmered like the river
beneath my dream's white bird.
Awake, I touched a pale bloom

and my mother scrubbed the peril
from my hand— angel trumpets,
they're poison, and a white egret

flew to the fence outside my window.
Above the girl, the white bird
slides to a branch as gnarled as her fingers.

Her skin is puckered like a fig
and coated with rot or burns
that glisten like honey when the sun

escapes the shadow of the white bird—
no petals have withered her palm,
which blooms from her sleeve
the way wood blooms into ash.
Bat’s Blood Ink

It’s named for the beast
that shrieks its desire
into nothingness and finds it.

I write my name nine
times in a sanguine ring,
unbroken around a plea

penned nine times over itself.
The words obscure themselves
into fate, dark syllables

mingling until the paper
absorbs the light,
but I don’t need to see.
Birth of the Peacock

Angra Mainyu, the sky’s devil twin, shaped its neck from the grit of his left eye and nursed it with the spoiled milk of the grime beneath his nails to prove he could craft one perfect being. The bird opened the eyes at the end of each paisley tail feather and shimmered against the shadow of the earth. Below, the people gaped at the purity of its color, trying to coax such radiance from their own mud-stained palms. They plunged into their own dark to search for brighter hues, drinking Mainyu’s fire, stroking their cursed steel, as if wine or blood could burst the world with beauty.
Our Snowstorm

Soothed in the eutony of his name,
that mercied scattering of bauble syllables,
we tripped beside the snow --
windowpanes and electricity
are microphones and we are amplified
into drifts -- the ceiling, he says, look
at the ceiling -- soft buttermilk fractals twisting
into shapes with meanings I divine
through some lovely nothing. Ties. Spirits.
Feet in the snow, an absence
of the cold sinking towards my bones,
until both of us are standing splayed
with heat at our cores, marveling
at this touch and smoothness and how
we rotate around our colored words.
Some say there exists only one electron in the universe, its presence known in every place, picking the spectrum we can perceive, unshadowed by what we might call time – it leaps from/to all localities, is everywhere/nowhere in an illusion of quiet constancy.

And with the motion of his tongue darting, blurred over his amphetamine dried lips, I think it must be true that there is no separateness between him and what he tastes, no difference in the immediacy of the air and the memory of yesterday’s. No epitaph detailing the peculiarities of the external – at least, he wouldn’t feel it if there were. He bursts into daylight this time, which is all time, his cheek lilied by the oils I rubbed across his skin before either of us were entirely awake. He is speed, sometimes, no preposition needed to mark the way his words come together at the seams, fluttering orange after 30 milligrams. The patient fidelity of this alteration will last until we both can un-squint our eyes, no hard sun to wrinkle us. “Feelings,” he says, “are not separate, they just are, they are, they are.”

And they do seem to hang still in each syllable, where I is no longer shouting across a chasm to You, shifting the words until they are, they are, they are. But he is here beside me, where I’m chattering caffeine into my quietude, where the spectrum of my introversion hums loudest, he can still rush into me – between – and I think, This is where the skin is least silent. I think, This is where the blood lilies the cheek into shade.

I think the self is but a reliquary for the past until you speed through it.
Memory

without it, you'd be indefinite – the puzzle piece
fundament beyond your duplicating cells
is a root, and in that root a stem

could unfurl if the past would lift its chokehold.
Just think how green you'd be, and clean, the way
the air smells like so much nothing

after rain. Drunk with color, you'd stretch,
heliotropic, stitching up that sun
from the pattern of your ventricles,

feeding chlorophyll into your own aorta
with your own sunray hands
Between Syllables

The eye’s aperture focuses
the mouth’s movements,
bending its spectrum
until prisms dazzle
the ear and burn through—
two suns eclipsed by two black
moons, refracting sound.
If my sight were a speculum
I would spread the dark
space behind your tongue.