

Cold

That day on the metro,
You gave me your mittens,
The ones your mother
Didn't knit for you.

Your fingers are blue,
You said, not looking at me.

They'll fall off dead,
You said, and gave them to me.

We saw a dead baby bird
On the sidewalk that day, too.

We couldn't not look at it.

Toe at it.

Count the ribs.

Poor little thing, I said,
And meant it.

I wish I could derail the train,
And mean it.

I wish I could un-knit
The mittens your mother
Didn't knit for you
One loop at a time.

That I could be that dead,
Hallow bones and blind eyes,
Instead of the poor little thing
That couldn't hate you right.

The Undoing of Eden

It was after she came back
That she disappeared again,
Into the shrinking garden
Where his steps fell heaviest.

I don't remember hearing a thud,
Or the sounds a body doesn't make,
Just the smell of too much bleach,
That her plants turned brown
And curled in on themselves
Like spiders dead on their backs.

On his belly in the grass
Underneath the apple tree,
I found him clutching the fruit
Once so innocently out of reach,
And the perfectly good ladder
Shining white on its side.

I watched him writhe and curse,
Then went looking for a rock to stop that.

Ribbons in Her Hair

I thought my mother had done them, but they weren't pink.
I asked her why, and she started to cry.

They weren't black either, like my father's after his accident.

They were something like the stitches of a baseball,
If the baseball was my little sister's head and the stitches were twine,
Because the coroner didn't have any pink ribbons.

Leash

It is our breed.

We are prone to violence,

You and I.

We would not call it violence, though.

Like pitbulls, we bleed because bleeding comes naturally.

Here, boy.

Throwing ourselves to instinct until,

Verging on rabidness,

You forget

I am a girl with breakable wrists

And pale freckled places

Your teeth ache white to know.

I do not have to be a girl to bleed for you.

Song of Ashes

Coyotes were the people of the land
Before the people came, the *abuela* sings.

When the young gods had spent
All the green and waters on disasters
And the land was dying.

The coyotes heard her withering,
Pissed rivers to fill her wrinkles
And drew shapes in the dust.
Diggers and flyers and killers.

New animals . . .

See them now, the *abuela* sings.

The boy with bones in his hair
And the girl pale with scars

Eating each other tenderly
In the lamplight of the alleyway
Where we leave our dead things.

They wear ashes on their faces
To hide themselves, and I look away
As if I do not know them.