

The Hunt

I.

There is a fawn in the woods
unaccompanied by its mother.

It bleats—or is that sheep—
but she utters no response.

There is a wolf: crouched and hungry,
salivating a river that carries away

the ants at his feet.

II.

How tender, how soft. How instinctually urgent. How red his muzzle becomes as the fawn falls silent. Artemis weeps. Hunters curse her father. The virginal moon begins to wane.

Toxicodendron Radicans [Sonnet 1]

toks-ee-ko-DEN-dron RAD-ee-kans

There's ivy growing in my head, pushing
out against my skull. Cracking it, one leaf
tentatively reaches for the sunlight
before the rest burst through. I have migraines

that not even Eve can alleviate,
no matter how much she wishes to pluck
these leaves. My mother gave up long ago;
the pink blisters swallowing her hands whole.

Ideas turn to soil— words decompose
as the ivy's poison seeps into grey
matter. Eaten alive. Lobotomize
me with herbicides, becoming Eden:

root my mind in unimaginable
perfection. Cast away all its toxins.

Hedera Helix [Sonnet 2]

HED-ur-uh HEE-licks

The promises you made me encircled
my heart like ivy, delicate tendrils
tentatively spreading to fill every
empty space between fragile bones. Crawling

from one failing organ to the next: leaves
ushering in revitalization;
sunlight warming the emptiness within
ribs. There are days when I want to cut myself

open—unworthy to be made terra
cotta—and let the vines pour out for you.
Praying to be touched by such a green thumb.
Yet, this is not that kind of love. There's no

roots feasting off white blood cells. No vines in
tender veins. You've chosen to nurture me.

A Mother's Love is Our First Heartbreak

We place them on
the curb, trash bags

full of lawn debris
from when the tress

exhaled. I exhaled.
My mother exhaled

smoke from her
cigarette that refused

to stay lit, forced out
by a breeze shaking

the trees. Until one
comes down through

the center of my chest.
Hearth torn in two.

Home no more a place
for my heart than

cigarette-calloused,
rake-blistered hands.

I Slept with a Siren because Her Breasts Looked like Sea Glass

I have thrown my heart to sea. Thinking it would be safer there, amongst ravenous sharks, than in the palm of your hand. Memories of you still haunt, each one tinged red. Covering me in blood; chumming vicious waters with my body. (Did you know they can smell blood from a mile away?) I wonder where the undertow will carry my heart: will it be speared through the bow of shipwreck, will it wash up on shore as a prize for a girl building sand castles. The perfect topper for a queen's tower. But this thing is no beautiful product of an "x" on a map. She should set it adrift again, letting the sharks take hold of the remnants that never made it through your teeth. Each empty ventricle spreading across the water's surface like moonlight. A pitiful piece of meat sacrificed to Amphitrite. But it is not enough. Not enough to explain what happens to a man who goes down with his ship or a person who simply cannot muster the words, *I do not love you anymore*.