

Lambs

My Dad

Man of faith

Pleaded innocent but was found

Guilty they said

Guilty

Was found guilty of man slaughter

Burned down a church

Fathers and Sisters still inside

For I had come home smelling of

Father Nathaniel

Red wine and lemongrass

A scent disgustingly familiar

Dad dreaded Sundays

Mother never knew why

In his fury

Drove into the night

Taking with him

A memory crawling over his skin

A tank of gasoline overflowing

A lighter angrily ready

I asked him one day

During visiting hours

How he felt

Righteous he said

Righteous

Astray

A dog had been struck by a car

My car

Clearly wouldn't make it

Emily still called 911

Poor thing was in pain

Chest collapsing, whimpering

So, when she wasn't looking

Or maybe she knew

Turned her back

Chose to burden me with the task

My hands surprisingly still

I felt the breath seep out of its nostrils

And I squeezed

Squeezed

Silence

Emily broke up with me the next day

I hadn't cried in a long time

Not because Emily left

Because of the dog

Papercut

In class they pass notes
Written on rose colored paper
Lettering bright sky blue
Visible for all to see except teachers
Whose tongues are no longer able to taste
The language we speak
Or even read what might seem at first glance
Nothing more than invisible ink

In class they pass notes
Boys and girls
All manner of angst and hands shaking
Feverish with summer's ailment
Finding it hard to breathe with
Sun choked lungs
Bright-eyed souls daydreaming
Waiting for the bell to ring

In class they pass nooses
But no one wants to talk about that
All manner of names gone quietly
I kept forgetting so I wrote them down on
Pristine sheets of paper heavy as steel
Folded into planes
Fighter jets swift and deadly
The stainless flock taking flight
Reflecting the sun's glare
Cutting through windows

Often, we collapse
Nursed to sleep by the rhythmic clatter of chalk
Continuously filling the void of the blackboard
Sometimes
Planes come crashing down into
The crown of our heads
Doves plunging swiftly to their deaths
Small drops of blood dripping down
The nape of our necks

In class they pass notes
Boys and girls
Throwing rocks at each other's temples
Bundles of paper crumpled
Locked and loaded with
Words distorted
How imaginative the mind of a child
When it means to hurt

Nobody

Being no one is fine

In fact

Most people fit into that category

But if I had to become someone notable

Notable by your standards

I guess I'd try to be

an astronaut

To get as far away as possible

But if I fail to reach these heights

I guess I'd be fine being me

As long as I'd find another being of nothingness

Willing to share their time with no one else

But me

Bang!

An old man asked me
With the kindest eyes
If he could speak his tragedy
And before I could decline
Had begun his slurred tale

Breath heavy with spirits
Said he was a fox
Yet, in all modes of being, a man
Red coat wild with the fragrance of pines and shallow streams
Streaks of old age in his fur
Had ventured deep into the South
A vixen by his side, all winter
Love not forbidden but frowned upon in these parts

The kids begged him, begged her not to go outside
Repeat after me, he said
Hunting season is over now

“Hunting season is over”

They aren’t allowed anymore

“They aren’t allowed”

And both
On a quest to feed their little ones
Left them
Alone
When a shot rang out
And another
And another
An ending so precise

He felt it
The gravity of the detonations
Shells red
Bursting shrapnel
Lead tasting of iron as it punctures through flesh
Bolted back to his den only to find it
Empty
Red and empty
Earth pigmented with rust and youth

He followed the crimson trail to a home not far
Household all winter
Peered through the windows only to see
Horror
A woman, stout
Pelt still warm wrapped around her neck
Bodies hung atop walls
A chimney fuming in a sweltering heat
Smoke gamey with the scent of his domesticated kin
Skin stretched and washed and treated and tanned and stuffed
A few horses even
Mounted by their necks
Halted decay
Rising to meet his eyes, a boy
Scowling at him

And I stopped to consider the boy's eyes
Thought of my son
Tried to forgive the boy for not knowing better
But couldn't resist my fangs

Broke the window

Stillness shattered

Rage frothing at the mouth

I made my teeth on the boy's neck

Gnawing, latching, ripping

The woman horrified grabbed her rifle

To kill me, I thought

But no

She looked at her boy

Lodged the end of the barrel in her mouth

And