

## FIVE POEMS

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## Lethe

Between the office and the train  
I decide that I am  
both or every black  
bird: a starling when it whirls  
and loops, a crow when it does not.  
A flying thing  
known only when low enough to name.  
Tetherless and sweeping  
but for the thought  
of someone in particular.  
Either way  
a gesture,  
unremarked.

## **I Can Count What's Left of You**

Old axe and sap on gloves  
Covered face, sudden,  
Empty lot.

Who am I to you  
After death, some shadow  
to indulge with patience?  
We met again,

I'm not sure what I hoped for.  
You list the ways  
I was never what you thought.  
And when I asked why

You returned, you told me you hadn't.  
You only came to prove it. Once again  
I play the toy still rattling  
Long after it's unplugged.

What did you expect me to be?  
I am a little tired all of the time.

## Again

The daughter I have been dreaming of since grade school  
came to me last night and I refused her,  
crying about not being ready, or sure.

Doctors handed me a plump pomegranate-seed  
in the shape of a perfect hexagon. They said  
*Don't lose this. You might need it.*

What did they mean when they said *need*?  
How will I know when I have refused her  
too many times?

In the honeycomb, hexagons are made by  
cells tightly pressed, heat and weight  
as each one swells with honey or brood.

I drop the seed child on the floor and weep.  
She has fine, lucent arms. I can't tell if she is moving.  
The doctors have all gone on to different rooms.

## Finally the sun has split

The thick morning sky,  
Enters the bathroom window,  
Steam scattering, fall wind  
Pulsing against screen  
Still glittered with the night's rain.  
I am reminded of my childhood prayers—  
How a break of light through clouds  
Or watching rain approach  
In sheets across a field  
Seemed to me proof  
That wildness was everywhere,  
That there could be some order to it still,  
That it could be beautiful,  
Even as it shook you.  
God spoke in birds  
Lifting suddenly  
And together.

Even in my earliest memories  
She is this faraway motion  
I trail to another  
New apartment  
In another new city.  
Now I understand  
Her need to be the first  
To really leave.  
I think she must  
Have felt abandoned  
The minute I left her  
Body, and that to hold me  
Until I first stood  
Might have been  
The best she could do.  
Still, she survived  
Herself somehow,  
Despite the tree  
And the fire and bruises,  
And I know now  
It was too much  
To expect her to be  
Mother, also.

## Sylvia

Sylvia, let's pull the furniture into the orchard,  
Burn it with the babies' clothes,  
Let them loose into the woods like rabbits.  
We will not miss the washing,  
Folding, cries into the bedsheets.  
What can we do but hope  
They take after the fawn and not the fire?