

Prelude

You wish your sister into the field
of your parents' old farmhouse.

December is a seam of tinged lace,
the color of lullaby. You fetch

a bucket from the shed and fill it
with water—exhume the bath salts

& gauze from underneath a bed
of black croci.

Your sister is naked by the cows,
her small breasts hanging limply.

The nose ring you pierced for her yourself
when you were kids.

The stars faithful to the moment
you pour water over her zodiac hair

& scrub until your knuckles swell red
as moonlight.

The way a mother would do it:
one hand on the soft of her cheek,

the other believing the body out of itself.
Stone-silver. An exodus in dark plumage.

Later that night, your sister slits the pockets
of her jeans if only to hold

everything in her hands at once:
the dirt, rich with oil beetles,

the shotgun roll of dimes,
the trigger, so easy to forfeit.

She cannot stay long. Parts of her
are already turning to feather.

The ground where you washed her
opens its mouth & you dive in.

