

I've got a star in my chest

1) They cut away my broken thyroid

and the cold works its way through my bones now.
I've tumbled through 21 Michigan winters
in ripped jeans and hand-me-down hoodies
without protest

I thought phrases like "bone-chilling"
and "wind-biting" were figures of speech.
When my parents spoke of cold that "ached" in the body
I figured they were showing their age.

I fetch the mail, shoeless, in October,
my roommate laughs at my shock.
The feet that have carried me
across every gravel pit in the state
now burn red, crunch, protest.

She takes me shopping
fits me for my first winter coat
(boys xl)
offers me one of her scarves

I wrap myself in the warm clothes,
tug on my old Docs,
she giggles, and when I ask why
she kisses my forehead.

I return home in December
my father asks me to accompany him to the woods
I put on my customary three layers, excited,
as the best time to follow your father in search of meat
is when the snow covers the ground
and the trees creak like rocking chairs
(the powder makes deer footfalls crunch
and their spilt blood bright).

...

We plan to sit until 6. We creep
toward his truck at 5:40
I'm convinced if I don't get inside I'll perish.

He turns on the heater and I groan
the ramrod tension between my vertebrae unspools
and he says that when you sit without moving
the cold "seeps in and grabs ya"

Gone are the barefoot walks through autumn
and the January bicycle rides

I cannot travel this terrain lightly, it seems
I can no longer revel in the absurdity of youth

2) 4AM. Alone. Window.

my body is a stranger's house
I don't remember where they keep the salt
no, I've never been here

I don't remember where I got this line on my eye
can't recall the origin of the lump in my forearm
I poke, prod, investigate,
a small red demon materializes on my shoulder to shriek

everyone starts packing with socks,
but I thought that a pistol would be safer.
Perhaps I should have considered a bear trap.

the load distribution of
220 years: pleading with the void to answer back
comes to approximately thirteen pounds
per intervertebral fibrous disc

my scapulae clench and flutter
like my body could fly away,
take this wee skeleton someplace low and cold and lonely.

3) I want to know when it stops hurting so much

a girl
ptsd therapy

 hangs up
 breathes
it wasn't your fault
he's gone, he may as well
be dead
 cries
 cuts
bleeds

0) girl in a suit at the church

*One day you'll marry a man who loves God.
You'll understand when you have kids of your own.*

sprinting through the woods
burrs pull at my jacket

*Why would you alter the beautiful body god gave you?
You read Stephen King? The Devil makes it look fun, remember.*

mud sticks to my wing tips
the vines grab my braids

*You'll always be my little girl, though.
You'll always be one of His, though.*

I stand in the stream: bald, barefoot, nearly naked,
let the stones cut my toes
let the river catch my tears

4) Harley

I could sit here
hurl this mug at the wall
put the chips in my palms
make fists
and punch the door until my hands run out of blood.

but then you wander over
drop your harness and leash in my lap
lick my hands
lick my face

5) I need to be held

two girls
lie beside
one another
in a pillow-top twin.

He clutches his hair
his chest
his sternum stutters

she touches his wrist
whispers

he breathes

palms open like peeled oranges

6) this moment

on a bed
under a window

the girl breathes
my heart continues to stutter

goblins patter against my ribcage
bats dance in my brain

she rolls over, skin radiates
the early afternoon moonlight

my flesh recalls the way she touched me:
tender and vast, and the gremlins hush

the amber in her hair cascades
over her naked collarbones

she smiles
a small boy in my heart awakens like an ipomea

7) I sat on the roof

for quietude
to write this down
to talk to the moon
to be taller
to see if I could smell the stardust

a screech
from a sky salted with light
a crow swoops down
drops a piece of comet into my mouth:
opened with soft laughter

Pulsar moves through my esophagus,
Infinity settles in my chest
blue-shifts, brings the oxygen back to my muscles.