

DAISY, DANDELION, SUNFLOWER
EVA LYNCH-COMER

The first time a man forced his way into my body
I broke turtle shells in half, filled the cracks
with pink glue, split crickets in half, watched their insides
move and shift like clockwork, wept over
trampled flowers, offered libations of honey,
named all yellow flowers Daisy—even the dandelion weeds.

The second time a man forced his way into my body
I became pregnant but no one could see my baby bump.
I slept on my stomach to flatten my belly as it grew,
drank castor oil and nothing else, stepped over hot steam
to shrivel my baby up. But my baby girl arrived
right in my shower demanding to be seen.
When I turned away, she was propped on the shower wall
like a painting her cries brighter than gold.

I carried my newborn out of the shower wrapped her
in a yellow plastic ShopRite bag tucked the bag around
her like a blanket placed her in a wooden drawer
and tried to forget her.

When the drawer rattled I slipped her packets of sugar
and saltines. When she complained of a dry mouth I poured
her tap water. In winter I heated her tea kept the drawer cracked
so she could get sunlight. While I worked at my desk
I let her hold my finger. I read her my poetry
before bedtime, took her out for bath-time,
wiped leftover sunflower petals from her hair
as I dried her off.

SPARROW BLOOD AND DUST
EVA LYNCH-COMER

I twist off a sparrow's head
drink the blood from its small body
hold it in the pocket of my mouth
spit it out on your face

Peel bark off a tree
with my bare fingers
lick the surface of the bark
lick it soft

Furrow into dirt
until my skin melts into
sparrow blood and dust

When I am done
I wash myself
in the clear stream
but mud clogs my lashes
and the taste of bark lingers
on the roof of my mouth

I cannot believe I never broke
your skin with my teeth
never tasted your blood
held the salt on my tongue
no, I laid myself in your hands

Now sparrow's blood
stains your skin
the next time
you try to capture another
your flesh will burn
and she will run



TAKE ALL OF ME
EVA LYNCH-COMER

after Billie Holiday

use my bones as sidewalk chalk
crack my pelvis on the pavement
clean your teeth with the shards

use my heartstrings as twine
to bind the hands and feet
of your victims

mix my saliva with my tears to concoct
the chloroform you will use to stopper
the girls' screams

when you are done take my braids
mop up the evidence
you've left behind

wield my fingers to write your side
of the story, my voice as a megaphone
to proclaim your innocence

the parts of me
you left behind
need constant tending

my voice hides in my throat
I must rinse my mouth with ocean water
then drink peppermint tea to speak

I chew garlic and ginger to quell stomach pains
spray my hair with rose water or it will not grow
soothe my bones with a cinnamon bath

I carry sea water in a plastic bottle
peppermint tea in a thermos
season my food with only garlic and ginger

I sing to my bones during bathroom breaks
bathe in cinnamon during lunch
my damp hair always smells of roses

the parts of me that you left behind
need constant tending
how long must I care for them?

ASH AND PINE

EVA LYNCH-COMER

After Tereus cut my tongue out
and chased me into the woods with an ax
I ran home to my sister Procne.
Without my tongue, I could not form the words
to tell her what happened
so I sewed black stars into my quilt
with a streak of red thread
slicing their bodies.

Procne ran her fingers across the quilt,
outlined the black stars in silver,
placed a warm towel above my head,
and left a glass of water by my bed.
On the days I could not get up to bathe
she waved sage over my quilt,
dabbed lavender oil on my wrists.
Procne dried orange peels
in my window sill and left the door cracked
in the mornings so our dog, Ash,
could kiss me awake.

On the day Ash led me to the door
Procne was waiting for us outside.
Our feet and paws crunched on pine needles.
A nightingale landed on Procne's left shoulder
and a swallow landed on mine.
Ash did not bark at either of them
rather we all walked together
watched rain drip into puddles.

The birds followed us home
perched on our roof
and sang to us
while I prepared our tea.

Procne added a nightingale to the quilt,
I added a tiny swallow bird next to hers,
and sewed silver raindrops
above the red thread.
When Ash laid pine cones
at the foot of my bed
I arranged them into a crown
upon my head.