

Genetics

My mother weaved the wheat fields blossoming beneath
the Caucasus mountains into my flax hair.

I am a museum exhibition curated by magpies: sunflower seed
carcasses, my grandfather's crooked nose and

protruding ears, crescent scars, snapdragons opening
and closing like giant St. Bernard mouths.

I broke my left arm three times. There is an impact
on the earth where bone met dirt.

I count my brother's freckles under anemic light, blood
streaming onto snow, half moons of currant.

I am falling, tossed overboard, rain sinking teeth
into skin. I pick at the bumps on my chin, unrooting,

erupting. Asleep under an ash blanket for millenia.
Wake up, the man shines a flashlight in my eyes,

the clock glows 4 am, there are sirens outside.
My mother plays Uno in her hospital gown, reversing

the depression with lithium pills. She comes back two weeks later,
I stay awake chanting *кров кипитъ* (blood boils) thrown under

the waves of the briny Atlantic. Womanhood is a staircase winding
x chromosomes entangled in bedsheets,

so I stare at Buttons by Carl Sandburg because I once met that sunny
man, shook his blond hand,

pretended that he wrote poetry for me, that I kissed his cheek backstage,
an ensemble girl giving status, never taking any for herself.

The peonies bloom for one month in May,
so sit on the brick and bury yourself until they wilt.

Redemption

comes from tears and pleading and then a bowl of cut up fruit.

Open the window. Let the chill air sweep in and the rain
patter gently.

Peel the skin off a grape, exposing
the inside, a quahog, a soft tongue,

the womb and the blood.

Remember.