

LISTENING ROOM

Sam Witt

I start by eating these words
the way that starling picks his wing-lice
on the window sill. I start here: a slight touch
of sunlight in your eyes, I'm following
these footprints as they spill from your mouth
down into the region of the stomach.

This tiny desert I bring to you,
drifting in my hands, signifies exile.
When I touch you, it's an oasis, miraged
on the air between us, a beautiful fingerprint
soaking the sheets with skeletons of rain—
my tongue is listening in as it traces
that blue vein, and sets your arm free.

I call it freedom,
this tiny bird puffing its thin, bloody chest
in your wrist. I call it now,
an answer: do we belong to the air yet? Call it a lie—
moments ago, in a rush to meet my angel,
the one with wings instead of ears,
I took a bite out of my angel's cheek;
it hissed away into the air,
a forgettable sigh. Look,

a curtain has appeared at the window.
Gingerly it lifts, offering these generations
of air. We accept.

I call it linen,
your skin breathing into my ear, this collapse

of air into flesh; its resulting ring,
what we call silence, only shared, touched
with heat, flushed, a little red.

Your stomach is not a cage;
honeydeath, this touch will not wash off.

Now we must dismantle our tongues,
something like soft-wrestling
an angel, untying the dock rope.
But we are not a boat, not even an immense green apple
floating here in this room.

We are constructing this damaged rose
in terms of fire.

Now we're set free, rising from the bed,
now adrift in these continents of air. Fingers,
listen closely to the shadows of your name
as they slide away
—we are not legs anymore, not fingers, not an ear.

We are a tiny thing, listening closely.

Too big for this room.