

Penelope Pelizzon

THE FLOWER CALLED *I WANT*

“L’herbe Voglio non cresce mai nel giardino del Re”

The flower called *I Want* blooms not
 within the gardens of Paradise,
nor do its roots number here

 among Purgatory’s narrow beds
where the soul descended
 cleanses itself with soil and a rake.

To accompany his loneliness,
 one newcomer sings lullabies
until stilled by the lettuces’

 indifference to song.
The flower called I Want blooms not . . .
 These phrases of his mother

carried over the water
 wither, so he buries them
beside the onion. The onion,

 whose single word is a copper bolt
demanding tears. In this middle world,
 day is ever day without change,

night is ever night. What he feels
 lispings as time is his tongue
returning its verbs.

 Across the mullioned greenhouse
walls, his image flashes
 and he perceives he’s slow

becoming a creature
 half-man, half-wheelbarrow—
the better half of each.

 The better half of man
is silent, and the barrow
 bears his load. Without voice,

he grows a purer ear
 for the thorns' cry, *bind me*.
Within, his last worldly

 solace of poise
is torn—Human, weep—
 by the onion's plangent command.