

ELEGY IN THE ABSENCE OF

By the second day, cheating becomes
the maiden, easier than playing honestly
burnt bones against dishonest bones who
think *everything* means *the world*, fiercely
grasping at the most hapless of weeds.

If, by the twenty-nine-hundredth day,
love continues following rules, surrender
becomes impossible. Nine years of news,
of the same thoughts, the reports, bug-
eyed and tender, evil and hot, a see with

120

no saw, a language for robots, a series of
ragged readings. Something is coming
to an end. The gift of assignments has
no need for a future, for a threat, or for
redemption. The overt textured air around

the people stays white. There is nothing
left to say. Names will not be remembered.
Lives have made no difference. Everything
is game for reconsideration: the heads
of Renaissance painters jousting tumors

from lips to bones, unlucky unlucky
unlucky unlucky, since 1530, since January,
since the end, since love has never been
enough, since everything is a question.
Try catching a tumbling birdcage, bouncing

from bottom to top, following the path
of a runaway resident, a coop flung by
the bird, the nuisance of belonging to a camp

THE IOWA REVIEW

that advocates the enclosures of love: closets,
blinded and folded, terror at dawn, and maybe.

Life is worth a mouthful of blood.
Pretend things are happening now.