

## Five Poems · *Marianne Boruch*

### WHITE ROSE

Once this rose knew too much.  
Our grandmothers moved easily among its small rooms  
and radiant furniture, our grandmothers  
as stubborn girls again, hoarding us inside them  
in clusters, grape by grape, saying things  
like: not me. I'll never be a mother.

Of course no one believes such truth.  
The rose is a liar anyway, its fabulous perfume  
proof—though even the mailman, his eyes  
like tiny hardened cranberries, slows past its ornate  
staged longing for a moment  
sweetened, like a glass of new milk.

Then the June solstice falls.  
The rose knows how long it's been summer: a few weeks,  
a whole lifetime. Its scent is a coined word by now  
for confusion, for misery, for love. It leans back  
against its stem like a spoiled daughter  
anxious to please only the boy who wouldn't dream  
of touching her. Slowly the street quiets.

It is barely light. Stars fill the sky  
several as thorns.