

The Gloves · *Emily Chalmers*

Black gloves, that in their last life
knew the first-hand touch of one
Sister Rosemary, Mercy
Hospital, who labelled them
in uneven stitches, hers:

they fit my hands exactly,
worn cotton fabric giving
at the seams once shaped to her
knuckles and joints that patient
work made gnarled. I slip them on,

new black hands, malevolent
crows, although I love them, dark
and smooth, like the idea
of the woman seeking out
black to match her nun's black.

They will not take flight, these hands
that more than any part of
the human anatomy
resemble wings. Five digits
that could lift into space

might have made room among
clouds. But, as if gravity
or memory held them in
place, they turn sadly beneath
the dim light of the rag-jammed

secondhand shop, fingering
their way toward the recesses,
shadows of a world where we
cross silences, this woman
and I. Hand over hand, we

need nothing more than these gloves
to connect us, the touch of
sweet herbs, my lost black sister,
who may, if I am lucky,
have mercy on me, her hands.