

The Absence of the Cabbage Moth · John Engman

I was invisible at age 12,
severe and devoted to questions

about plant and animal kingdoms.
I asked, nobody answered back,

I felt invisible because of this.
Anything I was willing to ask

was an act: willing my becoming
visible, simply *willing*. I walked

downstairs into illusions mother
kept her silence about: how and what

death of the red cat, who and why
and what gave the life to a white crocus.

If the perfect corpse of wax apples,
pears and melons in a wooden bowl

couldn't hold her attention, who was
I? I asked if this illusion meant

an imperfection in the world was false.
She wouldn't say. It was her silence

that affected me like alcohol.
Somehow I expressed myself: big white

soft shirt, rose gabardines, a hurt look.
I asked, kept asking: *Who are we now?*

*Is this condition permanent? Is
uncertainty like garden darkness*

*only a mirror to be pushed and
pushed away without success? What good*

*news makes sense as it enters the world?
What next? Is death or rain predicted*

*by the absence of the cabbage moth?
Mother, please describe the cabbage moth*

*the red cat and white crocus in great
detail, tell me all about myself.*