

The Ewe Lamb

But the poor man had nothing but one little lamb, which he had bought. And he brought it up, and it grew with him and with his children; it used to eat of his morsel, and drink from his cup, and lie in his bosom, and it was like a daughter to him.

- 2 Samuel 12: 3

I raised my one ewe lamb
as a daughter, fed her
red clover, the last hearts
of my cabbage, offered
her inky lips my cup.
She rested her chin
on my neck at night, her hoofs
on my cloak, her breathing
the wind on the waves
of sleep's pure waters.
Sleep: an animal's word
for *bless*: hoof of her heart
to the hoof of my heart.
The dusk before her slaughter
we walked together, pauper
and kin, over the meadow.
I sang to her, then
I unstrung the rusted bell
from her collar.

Something He Did

One day when nobody else was home
my father polished off the last of the beer,

stripped down to just his cuffed dungarees
and stood on the porch and quit thinking

long enough
to shut out the bird noise, then struck

with his father's ten-pound ax
again and again what would have been

the pear tree's waist if it were a girl.

Doll

I twirled my Christmas doll Judith so hard
by her arm that the beige rubber finally thinned,
and tore at the shoulder.

I hacked off her Dynel curls, gave her
a crew cut. I did not stash her
under my bed. Instead, I slit her pink

checkered smock and bonnet and left her
like that near the floor vent, the shells
of her eyelids shut.

The metal-rimmed holes
where the water went into her mouth
and came out of her bottom

rusted. I'm sorry for hapless objects,
a rain-pummeled mitten, a lamp set out
in the trash.

I spanked her; I stepped on her.
There is nothing to understand.