

A painting of a woman with long dark hair, wearing a dark blue dress, lying on a bed with white linens. She is looking towards the right. The room has a window with white curtains, a white metal fan on the wall, and a wooden floor. Two cats are present: one is on the left side of the bed, and another is sitting on the floor in the foreground. The text 'STILL' is written in large, yellow, outlined letters at the top left. 'A B A G A I L' is written in white, spaced-out letters across the middle left. 'THIS' is written in large, yellow, outlined letters below 'A B A G A I L'. 'P E T E R S E N' is written in white, spaced-out letters below 'THIS'. 'HOUSE' is written in large, yellow, outlined letters at the bottom left.

STILL

A B A G A I L

THIS

P E T E R S E N

HOUSE

STILL

ABAGAIL

THIS

PETERSEN

HOUSE

ORCHARD

for forty years
your face
 turns to petals
and falls into my lap

still this house
 won't die.
we laugh
count corpses
sprouting in the garden

the lime trees heavy
with Benzamine
 and Alorac

the mailman carries his limbs
up the driveway

 bringing
Gurney's Seed catalog

remember
 the tomatoes I ordered

that blistered on the vine

still

your hands trembling
two mockingbirds

don't worry
if the plums in the fridge
don't keep they
can go in the compost
with all the fruit

we never ate.

THE ARTIST NEVER GAVE YOU EYES

I found you heaped & picked you up.
You wouldn't straighten like a doll, wouldn't look
at me: all nuance, no edges.

Already it's morning.
I uncoil the rope, binding
our arms. I'll be the body.

Let me move you the way
water transmutes skin, & the sun
is only green because it's early. Come
watch the park glow brighter with rain

It's early
& I'll reveal how many ways the body bends in the wet grass.

NO. 6 (VIOLET, GREEN AND RED)

Oil on Canvas: Rothko, 1951

My father points at mountains,
measuring his wilderness.

Like any good daughter,
I tighten, a skinned rabbit, strained
knuckles against rope,
and rush to meet the rock

faithfully,

catching the man

as a raven

gathers misaimed

words.

Abby, your skin is a season.

Open, scar.

There's nothing

left to fall once we make the top.

I wait, violet in the east,

for my father to turn

and tell his sun

that it's bright and cold take my gloves,
sit closer, take my hand,

can you imagine living

over a waterfall?

in just
moments—

listen.

MANGO SKINS

When Spain was a season and
The walls began to change,

We crossed down 5th and 22nd—
Sweat, pigeons, Pynchon,

Your shadow, mine—underground
We were the sleeping man

On the train, dirty with repetition
And unfinished coffee—

I'm telling this wrong. Today,
You cut your hair and I wondered

If the ego needs two bodies. It must,
The way I measure my torso in

Your hands. Don't laugh—but can
The mirror see its own reflection,

And who makes the music, the note-taker
Or the bird. And when the book breathes

Who wrote the first word.

FIXING ROSES FOR NATALIE

I fold soil into blankets warm
with copper and iron.

Roots woven through throaty earth—
I'm humming, dankness worming its way

still deeper brown. I gather spiders and bulbs, hollow
peach pits, shed snakeskin and sunken teeth in

clammy hands. My toes: blackened
remnants of a sputtered fire. Time grows

over the char. You know the universe is ordered
so the sun can color the roses—women become

seaside cliffs and meet the waves.
In the hours before morning, it's no surprise

I am here, spade and burying.
In the encroaching rot

gold hair grows cancerous.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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Acknowledgments: "Mango Skins" was a finalist for the 2018 Puerto Del Sol Poetry Contest. "No. 6 (Violet, Green and Red)" appeared in *Hawk & Whippoorwill* magazine in 2018. Cover: "Genevieve" by Mary Sauer, 2012. Used with kind permission from the artist // marysauerart.com.

published in 2019 // penandanvil.com/chapbooks