

the magpie poem

by Jasmine Khaliq

my magpie knows
words beyond my mouth
ich, no, whimper of the neighbor's
backyard dog, *No*, splash of sick into sink,
consanguineal may I have a definition
c-o-n-s-a-n, teeth popping the grape...

have you seen her?

she will respond to nothing.

she does not like to be touched.

she can be lured.

she likes to gaze upon herself.

I don't expect it of you, but should you open
your chest for her, she will come
and nest inside.

she nips when I stop my sweetclucking.

tore a pearl from my ear twice. she reminds me of you. when
you kissed me through nosebleed. brushed my hair
with bramble.

I grow tired watching her decompose
the fruit that falls.
starch clumps into breadcrumbs.
she demands my stare.
I've learned to mend clothes with hands,
only.
learned to pull thread through the eye blind.

I place mirrors everywhere.
endless garden. from the window by the
sink,
I demand my stare. hope glass-me
has her on my shoulder, or some sign of her:
bloodmatted hair behind the ear, feathers
pulled through eye,
fresh pockmarks freckled over the nose.

my magpie is missing.
I dream of her at night.

sometimes she's found a new yard and new ears to eat.
children to teach sounds to.

others are worse, with all the melodrama
of dining-room-table-scape. but

there really is no where else.
I am alone

in those, napkin over my lap.
taking fork and knife

to her tiny body. spitting
bones into birdbath.

I know you never liked her.
my magpie, my magpie,
my bramble baby,
such a little thing, her skull
an olive in the palm

what to do, without her
other than collect my needles
and return to you

the magpie knows
words beyond my mouth.
across the gorge, in the yard,
children in their green caps sing:

mag, pie, mag, pie,

bramble baby olive eye

I, I, mag and pie,

k-i-s-s-k-i-s-s-i-s-s-i-s-s-i-i-i

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