

Two Poems

Sarah McCartt-Jackson

Coyote

Never have so many coyotes
been held in one hand, all gray and gaunt and howling
each bearing this thought in its wildblack eyes:

a woman somewhere stands in a long-fallow field
where trees have begun to return to the sunlight
the ground not solid but grassblades and rag shade.

She hears an animal rushing through the plants,
twigs breaking, breath heavy enough to push her down
but she cannot move because she doesn't know

which way it is coming, and the sound has pinned her
to her shadow. She recognizes panting, legs thrust before body.
Holds her cry as a coil just behind her tongue.

Compass

Fireflies, tiny yellow heartbeats
outside Ora's window, tap the edges

of the panes, their glassed faces shine
in the onion-bulbed lantern:

Twelve children and so many gone
but who would not leave her:

Lily was flame-wing smoke,
the shuffle of feet. Prairie was sigh
of the green beans' opened lid. Alva was
bloodroot that blooms for one day
on a hillside ripe with Homer who was
liverwort burst from bouldersprings.
Eldred, second, had no middle name.
Opal was the hush of snow piled
on a limb. Ola B the wind that shook it.
Elmer was rivershore mud song
mushing up between your toes. And Ruby
was fistfuls of clover ripe to eat. Sharon was
eldest, who lived long and longer
than the rest. Hobie the horse
who chewed a hole through barnwood.

When springtide ends, Ora cuts her arm off
to count the rings—two for each season. None

for summer. The glacier-melt begins to rise from her

chest light as bodysheils of insect-molt:
something that tiptoes between light and dark.