

CHORUS

It always begins
with three girls in a room, huddled, so aware
of their father's distantly milling away in the sheds.

In the center: a rabbit.

You know the one.

It has been named,
but that doesn't matter now

because only the girls decide what matters.

They like to decide now
that they each have their own rooms.

Still, they enter the house, tangled up
in some bewildering purpose

and in the eldest's dark room, declare to each other
that lives have to be lived

by saying *Yes*.

One *Yes* is the rabbit:
Act like it. Go around the room!

And so there they are: elegant bodies
leading each other with carrots.

But this isn't enough,

to be fools for a day.

They notice its flat nostrils,
how they appear to be snipped,

as if someone took scissors to that soft land.

They notice its strange stomach.
They open its ears and blow air softly in.

They do not mind that it does not look
at any one girl for very long.

They inspect its sex and still do not know
what any of it means.

Like them, it is overwhelmed: the little wail
folds into the corners of the dark room.

This is how it is with tender things:
the girls felt, then, the desire to shake it,

to take it in their arms

and press until it cries again.

They are orderly and take
turns: one girl presses

the small belly flat against the wall.

Another has a hard hand.

They only know how to consume.

Finally, the desperate body is taken
up by the father's hand,

it's bright ear filling with apologies

and the sad strike of knowledge

of that cruel circle.

CHORUS

We told her not to name the baby

Magnificent,
but we understood how she wanted a boy

to have a name larger

than himself. Everything was small
for her—everything made its way

past without seeing her at all. She was tired

of cleaning someone else's house.

When she was pregnant, she dreamt of plates.

They were flat—the easiest to wash.

Once, she woke and told us she'd broken
a plate in her master's house.

She was given the shards and
sent away.

But this was kinder. This

was the work she wanted to do.

She had a trophy now. Her round belly,
her flat plate baby.

He would be so easy to clean. How
could anyone eat off him to begin with?

Each morning, she woke: *he is a gold plate, girls.*
He has blue flowers.

He won't break easy.

CHORUS

Mother, we know now that it is really Eden

we are working towards,

that each day spent at the work table

is paired

with another day we can spend
in the sun.

We know that we must return

the feathers we have found.

We know that each albino body

longs for another.

We know that those beautiful, black dogs

are not rabid, only hungry.

We know that we have run out
of things to name,

and so we name our breasts,
our stomachs, our lover's penises

because there is nothing left unclaimed.

We know that we are too near to lust,

but we still want to be let in.

CHORUS

We are told to run home
after work, but we don't

want to return to our beds.

We break off to the river,

make like we are herons
with our long, flat bodies.

We examine each other and determine
Yes, your neck is graceful too!

We are like a chorus in that way:

And your wrist, and your ankles.

We fall into a pack of *yours*.

We measure. We prod. We stick
our cold feet onto each other's backs.

In the river, we submerge
and make our hair wild.

We've been preparing for this,

eating oils and rubbing our temples
to make our hair grow.

But we stop now. The fires in our chest quiet.

We remember ourselves because Grace is here,

her temples red from being rubbed throughout the night.

It's been a month since the sickness and
her fine, black hair hasn't made it back.

We are quiet. We close our eyes
because we have made our girl sad.

In the cold sunlight, we decide to be better.

Charity begins it--the chorus: *Yes, you do have wings! Yes.*

We break out:

Yes, they are black, like your hair. Yes, like your eyes.

Charity brings us home: *Yes, you are a black dove. The only one.*

CHORUS

Charity says, *I didn't need it anyways.*

We decide that can't be true.

For six days, we daydream
about what use it was.

It could be made into a rope.

It could be made into a broom.

We are inventors now.

Charity says, *It doesn't matter today.*

And we whisper, *But tomorrow?*
Or in April?

She grows tired of us.

We each make a noise
when we understand,

our mouths open like spouts
and rain out.

At night, we put a chair in the center of the room.

We each sit, and Grace sings
as she presents us with scissors.

We have never seen a silver like that,
quick and liquid.

We like it so much we take turns holding it

to the nape our necks.

In the morning, we stand in a line.
We hold our cupped hands out

and release our hair to the wheat field,
where we will never find it.

We say, *Goodbye Sarah. Goodbye Claire.*
Goodbye Rebecca, June, and Honey,

because we have named each strand.