Armature

—with line from "Suitcoat" by Andrew McNabb

Never wanted to be a timberman anyway—she cut into cloth, read from the instruction manual how chain mail is the easiest armor to imitate. Trees to her were sacred things, heartwood stronger than tungsten, and how they send messages to one another. The whole body must simulate the chain— bark: dark gray, ash, white, peeling or smooth, simulated in leather, covered with metal scales or discs. Such garments appear realistic and so she slipped inside one, felt the body, her spine shimmied against rough surface that welcomed, her arms canopies, leg pieces as foundation her crown home now, roots part of the buckram. She was bone to bone, treed.

Cloud Cover

vessel, the hourglass, stem and root he cut seasoned poplars out of wet summer grass skin, smooth or mottled, golden, even russet the hammer, the tape measure core and visible blush the template see how it pulls and how easily it comes cool to touch, so cool, hand stroked and stains early on when placed within brown paper lined with muslin satin and gimp, silver handles and plates this season is too short, how upright when held in a palm in the shade from the shed engraved names when known the color of leaves when first beginning to turn cannot be duplicated his hands gentle season is short ripens the hinge miter the sound is silent

In the Packing and Choking Rooms, 1864

—and on their way, communicated the fire to the dresses of others.
from *Washington Star,* June 17, 1864.

Have I cut the linen?
Have I rolled the cloth into cylinders?
Have I measured 50 grams of powder?
Have I placed the cartridges inside pigeonholed boxes?
Have I put in too much powder?
Have I inserted the lead bullet inside the cylinder?
Have I tied off the ends sufficiently with thread?
Did I close the cartridge?
Have I packed cylinders in tight with others?
Have I filled the boxes to the utmost?
Have I counted the bullets in bundles of 10?
Have I laid the bundles in ammunition boxes?
Have I forgotten to line the boxes with waterproof paper?
Did I measure the rows, five feet high?
Can I reach them on tip toes?
Have I snugged the cartridges vertically on end?
Did I remember to apply the lid, screw it in place, coat with water repellent?
Have I minimized the spillage?
Can I stay still enough?

Inside with Roman Candles

Standing in shadow I was unseen, my polka dot dress, white flares on a night sky. A man in a dark suit places his head under a darker curtain. Light shutters.

I see whirling Saxon Wheels, Flying Pigeons, Fire Crackers and Dandelions! Come, get your lanterns, illuminations inside a blue flower pistil green leaf though I'm not visible.

The barrel of a canon bayonet, Cracker Pistol cannot match my polka dot dress cannot hold a candle to my white flares on a night sky or the luminous phosphenes floating stars behind my eyes.

Some jumped

Did you ever
skip rocks,
see them leap
at least three jumps?

whistle with a blade a grass between two thumbs
or rolled your tongue,
pressing index and middle fingers into flesh, hard?

And did you
fold favorite pages down at the corners,
only to have your mother unfold all
your creases?

Would you ever
lie on your back
whisper to Venus

rise, look at yourself
naked
bare in the night?

Could you
plunge
your hand
in the soft coat of a large animal,
lose someone

willingly
break a window
the shard
of a splinter
wonder

of snow
as it falls?

To the Ones Left Behind

Think of a roan pony in a field of buttercups, how she grazes, and of a warm bowl of spring peas and mint. How oil bleeds as a color wheel of greens. Remember your mind tries to trick you. Shut thoughts down like a scrim. Put your hand out, shout *forgive* and *forgive,* then forgive yourself. Repeat: *I am strong, I am strong*. Think: *Wood Violets, Velvet, Moss.* When you are whole, catch a city bus. Look at the faces around you, the ones who carry groceries, umbrellas, bicycles, books or small children. Tell them your mind is a windmill. That you are thirsty, that you are making way through dense brush, a wilderness on fire, a wet-land bog. Watch faces open as petals. Then imagine the smell of newly washed clothes when left out to dry, summer's first peach, the letter O.

don't forget the sound
of tree frogs singing *but it's*
you, it's you, you.

From *Daily National Republican*. June 20, 1864.

SAVED BY HER TONGUE — A girl who worked in the laboratory at the Arsenal where the heart-wrenching calamity occurred on Friday noon, escaped from peril by a singular circumstance. The young lady is unusually taciturn, but on this-day she felt ~~an~~ irrepressible desire to talk: and for no reason that she can imagine, her tongue ran on at such a rate that she was reprimanded by the overseer of the room. This did not check the unruly member, and finally he sent her home to get rid of her loquacity. Before she reached her dwelling, the explosion occurred, which sent out of existence a score of those who were at work around her.

Unspooling

One body which bore the vestiges of clothing about the loins
from *Washington Star,* June 18, 1864

—after Ada Limón

Twenty-one women died in an arsenal fire.
The youngest was twelve years old.
There it is. I've said it in the very beginning:
it's just one more wound that originates on either
side of the backbone between the ribs and hips.
What lingers in loins as fire.? I wonder
had they ever felt that stirring, thimble heat?
Skin on skin, a hand between
thighs? So soft. There. Flesh flushed in a mirror.
There a spark, some flash, some slipstream, fall to floor,
a broach, a bit of cloth, a belt, some bones on boards,
spindles of limbs and loins. Trays of ash.
There, I've said it again, here for us.
Their wanting as close to what we called caress.