

Proud Flesh

Charles Semones

Full of yourself already,
you should have known your leaving
was tossing light away—
your body-light I'd come to count on,
like the fire you'd built in my heart:
fire as cold as this month's ghosthood
of redbud, constant as my name,
on greening hills, in dim hollows.
As dusk comes on, you won't tease me
in the curvature of wind
haunting its way back home.
I sit in clean sight of the rusty bell,
without a clapper, that signifies your
famous silence.

Your absence dangles
in midair, midbrain,
like the unanswered question
I never dared to ask when you were here.
I've always thought proud flesh
means *not healed right*,
but you're proud flesh of another kind
entirely, the kind that brings a person
low. Too much pride goes before a fall:
you know how strict the scripture reads.
Some old would-be saint lessoned you
in those drawly mornings, afternoons
of Sundays racked by tedium and guilt.
And to think you're the one who turned out
truant.

It's plain as Polaris you know how
to keep away. Rest easy. No country song
will find you. Seasons will flare and fade;
cold snaps and rain squalls will happen.
Now you're too far north for love or pity. . . .
I pare my heart down to its core for truth:
you've been gone so long, I'm halfway
used to it, half over the wasted light,
the proud flesh of you.