

House of valentines.

A scarlet character firmly basted in place, I fetch and carry now only for the sensual. A little New England schoolteacher with a touch of the Candy Box. She is breath within breath, even invisible, even at new moon. Ancients believed a bleeding woman's touch could blast fruit, sour wine, cloud mirrors, rust iron, blunt the edges of knives. Don't tell anyone I'm only going through the motions, making vain gestures to recall the Muse, *deus absconditus*. Admit I dream of jackals pulling down gaunt giraffes. Notice all that's left in the orchard are withered yellow pears and the nights don't seem to be getting longer. Maybe this will be a short year. The neural rut for pain had just begun to silt up, I only gave him a koan but he took it badly. [*What is the practice of a lifetime? The appropriate response.*] Why would I repatriate, go back to the range. Because there are things I need there, and nobody else knows where I left them. Nameless simples; sequined lamina, discovered molten or shed; primitive gems; some prenatal sympathy. *She calls herself Parena, says that was her name before she was born.* Illume water with a mirror, rose petals, saline; asperge. Then return. Strophe. Sing, enchant. Safe to go limp, lascivious and plastic, smooth a silver brush through lyrics or red willow limbs. My mare could scent and pursue ponds from half-a-day's distance. The long creek—fragrant, creamy. The wind gifted to blow everywhere. First quarter, the crook of her half-smile just visible above the treeline.