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Red Fox, Barn Owl

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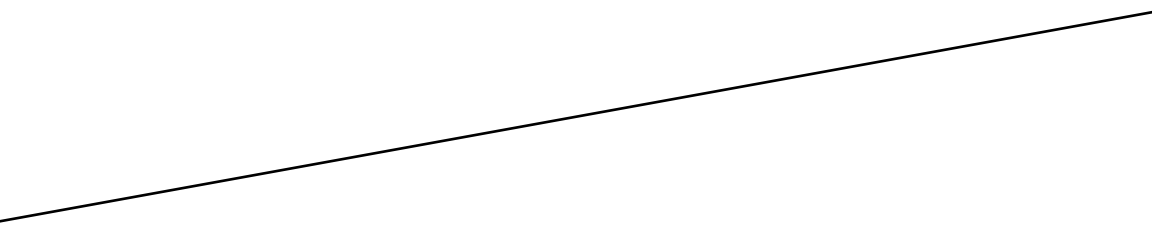
Red Fox, Barn Owl

1. She sat in the shower,
his sweat peeled from her chest like moist wallpaper.

The world stared at her between water drops.
She couldn't feel the warmth.
Velvet steam, fragile mind.
On a swing set at midnight,
stars like open wounds
etch time on her eyelids.
She's free from
his momentum,
their back and forth.

2. She left his apartment,
got coffee and drove for hours.

A fox in the middle of I-94
a fresh smell like skunk.
Tufts of fur swirl around its mangled body
as semi-trucks and Ford Focuses speed by.
She imagines the moment it died.
Its kits scurry to the other side,
neck snap, back break.
Orange and red fireworks
against the grill of a truck
towing a livestock trailer
to the slaughter plant in Plainwell.
The driver didn't notice.
He began to weep
over the loss of his daughter.



3. She kissed his neck, pressed hard
in the shallow grave between his shoulder blades.

His sanity coughs
below six inches of regret
as her lips trace and knead
over its resting place.
That spot aches,
ties in knots,
waits for someone,
reminds him that
he sleeps alone.

4. She heard his heart,
wondered why he never claimed it.

He told her his chest was empty,
you can't train a barn owl where to land.
She lay in his arms
the first time in weeks
a walled-in flutter;
the impassioned beat or
the imprisoned flap
of an owl's wings.

5. How long had it been since he felt his heart?
She told him to stay.

He sat on the edge of his bed
blew smoke out the window,
She curled beside him.
A comma in life.
Cold hands.