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Self-Portrait

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Emilee Kinney

Self-Portrait

I've crashed into a snowbank outside
 the church I only attended for funerals
 and birthday parties slept with shadows
 of cornstalks rustling the blanket thumbtacked
 across my window picked at the insulation foam
 exposed and bubbling along the unfinished sill,
 collected the bugs that died in it for made-up spells
 I've ridden in beds of pickups with wind pulling my hair
 and tears like Fall whisking leaves and late bloomers
 from branches I've loved men who spit black
 from their lips and wear steel-toed boots
 to the grocery store I've kissed women
 who button their flannels to the nape of their ribs,
 skin glowing and dewy from lakes and bonfires
 I've worked under sun and rain horseback
 and wagon-bound I've had a lot of trouble believing
 in God why is he a father and also a son?
 Why is Mary nothing more than an unsuspecting womb?
 They say leaves are for healing but we collect them like ashes,
 pull them away from gardens and homes hope
 they decay without clogging the creek I've fallen into
 a pile of raked leaves used my body to soak
 their damp into my clothes I know the Great Lakes
 are most beautiful when they lap at tree roots teeth
 at a muddy bank scatter sheaves of ice and colored glass
 in places we can reach I've sat on a bucket in the woods
 for hours with snow falling in slow heavy breaths
 and a gun across my lap I've held a doe's legs open
 while they gutted her insides pulled organs clean out of a buck
 without gloves I've learned the difference
 between pulling a bowstring taut as the veins
 in men's necks and how you do not pull a trigger
 just as you do not pull your fingers into a fist
 untuck that thumb raise your pitchfork point down
 only point at what you want to kill or mark or love.