

Marcella Remund

LETTER TO MY FATHER

It's four in the morning,
my skin warm against my husband's back
where I curve along his spine,
his breathing a chant.

I waited a few paltry decades for you,
this hole blasted in me
where your name echoed
in perfect rhythm with my beating heart.
You wouldn't believe the things
I've stuffed in there to muffle that sound—
bits of strung-out boys,
ancient incantations for the dead,
a shell-shocked drug dealer,
bark from a weeping willow,
apologies scribbled in crayon.

Do you know how many times
I peeled back my skin
to show you the color of my blood,
the way my lungs held air?
Late nights, drunk or stoned,
I'd sleep with my ear pressed
to the steel tracks, waiting for a sign
you were coming back
to say something.

Then one day you turned
in a stab of memory and I saw it—
the hole blasted in you.
We were only
what you stuffed in there,
temporary, all those awkward teenage angles,
never enough to fill you up
or muffle your own dark names.

It's quiet now.
Only a man's breathing—
that prayer, that song.