

## The First Thing He Gives Me

Build the fence  
inside the fence.

One to keep  
the dog out

one to keep him in.

Scrape the leaves  
and mulch away.

Find below  
an undoing of soil

already fine  
in its turning.  
He says  
it was always  
waiting to be garden.

The seeds hardly need  
to be buried  
a knuckle  
pressed in soil.

We funeral more  
than required.  
Some will  
and will not  
rise. He says

the seedlings  
should be  
half submerged  
until their earth  
dissolves

in ours.

Let sun  
and water work  
their change  
between here

and harvest.

Lay out  
the plastic snakes  
enough  
to scare off birds.

## After Eden

Then we saw the garden in Miami  
swollen with sin, its negligee moss a choking  
glamor. From the lone *Eucalyptus deglupta*, I wanted  
to plant a forest sloughing its skin, undressing shameless  
into rainbow. Not all growth is so beautiful. Mostly  
it is a violence, which is why I told you the spectral tree  
is a sad, strange miracle as all miracles  
are sad and strange, reminding us how removed we are  
from the ideal. If only we were apricot blossom. Then  
our pollination would be fruitful. There was once  
five weeks of an embryo unwanted, also an apricot tree  
far longer, years before  
our little nonexistence, years when my sister and I  
in the doughboy swam our harvest from low branches.  
Our yard now, yours and mine, is mostly gravel, save for  
the vegetable garden, two trees, and a hammock  
where we Sunday in the brief alchemic seasons  
between spring and summer, between summer and fall.  
We would cradle in the skirts of trees lit from beneath  
and I'd sweep my hands to their dispassionate thighs.  
That was when we thought love was the theater  
of branch shadows on fence, that was the epoch preceding  
third-act revelation, when idols and ingenues must  
be undone by the blight lying dormant inside them.  
We tried to escape the threat of ourselves in the quiet middle  
of California, Neptune and nereid swimming  
the tycoon's hill, bathed in deep and turquoise waters  
never watered into land. We fled those marble trees  
in Thailand, north and south, the whole country a garden  
birthing fig and cashew, rambutan, castor.  
Maybe that's why I led you to the orchid farm

outside Chang Mai, manifold species mounted leaf to leaf  
on steel frames. They were too prolific in assemblage  
divorced from forest in strange congregation, each vulvic  
blossom bred as careful as our sadness. There was  
no miracle here, just its affect, bloom and grief  
impatient for rain, sluice the hose without caring where  
the water comes from, without caring for anyone's thirst  
but our own. I knew the price and still we bought  
our knit scarves, our wool coats. We took them on the train  
from Paris, walked them down the mirrored hall.  
Outside, the fountains were dry, the garden quiet  
with snow. We paralleled the small trees wrapped in sacs  
to last the winter, well dressed as the dead, and doomed  
as the hands that paid other hands to plant them.