

Heather Cadenhead

How Do You Say Goodnight?

Rain pelting on a tin roof, like God's wrath—
and you can feel both. You make your body
useful: hands for killing, lips for pledging.
I'm tired of this sick world, you say, but
yesterday, you were tired of a safe world.

We drive to the old house and watch
the kids who live there now ride their bicycles
up and down the driveway. And our hand prints
are still there, where we stuck them in cement
the summer you got your tonsils taken out.

I know this: when you leave, the door
will make that *cacinch* sound like
it does when you go to work and I will
be here, like I am when you go.

I sit on the porch swing later and raise
my thumb against the sky, blocking out
a star or maybe even a whole constellation.
And, hugging my knees to my chest, I wonder
if he still remembers me after all these years.

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We sleep side by side, not together – For A.S.

You and I sit in a forest glade,
reading letters from your box

marked THINGS TO BURN
(souvenirs from lovers)

and we laugh at the misspellings,
the lust, the boredom.

You start a fire with
wadded paper, a metal bucket,

and an 89-cent gas station
lighter, sun and dark

dimming you
to a silhouette. The oaks

caramelize to black wood
as the moon comes up

and we find a cave to camp at.
We crawl into sleeping bags,

where we talk, eating potato chips
by flashlight: we say nothing

is bleak when it is tangled
in arms and warm breath,

and that lust mistaken for love
is good until you recognize it.

We close our eyes, knowing we
are not just two bodies or

two mouths, but people
with nothing to try at.