

## the magpie poem

by Jasmine Khaliq

my magpie knows  
words beyond my mouth  
*ich, no, whimper of the neighbor's*  
backyard dog, *No, splash of sick into sink,*  
*consanguineal may I have a definition*  
*c-o-n-s-a-n, teeth popping the grape...*

have you seen her?  
she will respond to nothing.  
she does not like to be touched.

she can be lured.  
she likes to gaze upon herself.  
I don't expect it of you, but should you open  
your chest for her, she will come  
and nest inside.

she nips when I stop my sweetclucking.  
tore a pearl from my ear twice. she reminds me of you. when  
you kissed me through nosebleed. brushed my hair  
with bramble.

I grow tired watching her decompose  
the fruit that falls.  
starch clumps into breadcrumbs.  
she demands my stare.  
I've learned to mend clothes with hands,  
only.  
learned to pull thread through the eye blind.

I place mirrors everywhere.  
endless garden. from the window by the  
sink,  
I demand my stare. hope glass-me  
has her on my shoulder, or some sign of her:  
bloodmatted hair behind the ear, feathers  
pulled through eye,  
fresh pockmarks freckled over the nose.

my magpie is missing.

I dream of her at night.

sometimes she's found a new yard and new ears to eat.  
children to teach sounds to.

others are worse, with all the melodrama  
of dining-room-table-scape. but

there really is no where else.

I am alone

in those, napkin over my lap.  
taking fork and knife

to her tiny body. spitting  
bones into birdbath.

I know you never liked her.  
my magpie, my magpie,  
my bramble baby,  
such a little thing, her skull  
an olive in the palm

what to do, without her  
other than collect my needles  
and return to you

the magpie knows  
words beyond my mouth.  
across the gorge, in the yard,  
children in their green caps sing:

*mag, pie, mag, pie,  
bramble baby olive eye  
I, I, mag and pie,  
k-i-s-s-k-i-s-s-i-s-s-i-s-s-i-i-i*

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