

CONFLUENCE

Make of me small fires, so I might fall in love. Eula writes the words. She hears no applause. She is afraid of the night and its illuminated questions. *Here, in this ruined quiet...* I am a piece of her, born of walks along a Shawsville river. *So be the highest tide, movable, blurred thin...* Nothing in between *...a shy one, a secret genre.* At dawn, Eula sings to serpents and wide ships deep in their distance. *You have to be strong.* But no one says why. I am born, movable, blurred thin. *Do you own it? Something precious enough to hide?* Eula tears pages from her journal. *Make of me a parable, so I might fall in love.* I am born, woven, searching in this body's cursive for the parable to shout. What do you make of me? *Darling, here, even the sparrows crush you, want of you just the same.*

VECTION

The illusion of motion
starts with a stationary object.

Wing and wing, one appears
and vanishes before the next.

My flesh moves like the night.
Undefined, gently parted.

Stationary object moves by impulse,
and I become still-life with finches.

An impulse of wind—
as some memories are—

where wild swans stitch the horizon.

TANGERINE

I heard Eula
startle;
swallowtails fed

on dead fish
near the creek,
delicate

yellow feast;
I saw her
standing there—

*but what then
was my question?*
Memory's pyre

pushed from shore—
her lips, answering
like birds

so softly
overlay the dark,
are stained

with citrus.

WELL-PLACED KNIFE

Daughter found my head resting,
as if struck by lightning,
a darkening drift stretched across the valley.

There was brightness where she saw apples
falling and traveled far,
not to touch or hold other shadows

or lessen what she would remember—
yet I remember how her dotted dress
announced the river, where we used to walk,

thinking we knew the secret gatherings,
places where sounds settle
long wings, the rookery of mythic birds

that met our cravings, our comings and goings,
and how easily they disappear.

RAMBUTAN

She rolled it across the table.
I thought it was a sea urchin.
She said it was fruit.
Red oceanic creature, not
an apple, not breathing.

And there were questions:

Why does it look like that?

Is something inside?

Can you bite it?

Is it safe?

Her eyes lifted,
and her lips parted,
and she simply bit the thing,
made its sweetness her invention.

EULA'S HANDS

My daughter tells me, *Smile, Mommy,*
smile 'til your eyes are gone. And I do
because isn't that what a mother does?

Obey these lovely burdens, bend
before the drapery of women inside my grief?

Not everything has to have meaning,
like how poets beg altars into stars,

but everything has feeling, and I
beg this, declare this in my daily tapestry:

if I keep wrapping, then I can keep going.
This is what I know, where I live.
I give it a face to speak,

enter my reflection,
and make my escape.

When I'm done disappearing,
I'd like to visit the sea, demand my usual drink,
and swallow that world without need for water.

NATASHA KESSLER

Natasha Kessler has called Nebraska home for all her living years. Prior to that, who knows where. She is the author of *Dismantling the Rabbit Altar* (Coconut Books, 2014) and the collaborative chapbook *SDVIG* (alice blue books, 2012). She is a proud graduate of the University of Nebraska MFA in Writing program, where she received the Academy of American Poets Helen W. Kenefick Prize. Her poems have appeared in *Sugar House Review*, *Sixth Finch*, *CAROUSEL*, *South Dakota Review*, and elsewhere. Natasha works as a writing center consultant at Metropolitan Community College in Omaha.