

Revisions of a Letter to My Daughter

By Annalise Hagen

I remember you singing to yourself
in the kitchen, notes over cut fruit

pretending yourself some
one else in need of amusement.

Boredom was dangerous
for you there. The fruit

was not fresh, it was frozen.
Its seeds were

pale things that fit under
your thumbnail.

You couldn't throw away
dead plants

and you wondered if perhaps
this was a sign

that you would enjoy rescuing things
of little consequence.

I envied your grandmother, who
cut her wedding ring off

her finger when they began
to grow around each other.

She spoke too much
as though her weakened syllables

were shelter.
She could never

accept that her mind

could throw away

faces or voices
she would always say

there is some resemblance
there, I see it.

You think me
some sort of disgruntled

disgraced specter that never
answers your messages.

I keep myself at bay
for you. I keep myself

whittled down to word
of mouth.

I speak and your ear
goes quiet.
You know
I am an arrogant

antidote
for forgiveness.

When we are apart
we seem to breathe

too well
for our own good.

I wish we could
curate our respirations

and hang them in a museum
for each other to view.

There, alone, with the shadows
of ourselves sleeping

we could say safely:
that exhale was from when

I first sighed, and that—
that inhale—

from when you
first laughed.

Beside the hours
that slowly fell

towards morning,
I was a tall fragment

I blanketed your sleep
with wings of stone.

But you knew the names
of all birds and angels

names I could only haunt,
my self a fleeting well

your self already
drowsy with being.

You saw the day when
I would become

vividly obsolete.
How dare you tell me

my name?
Even I do not know it.