

LOST SELF IN SAPPHICS

DANIELLE CADENA DEULEN

summer, then fall, winter, then spring. starlings arc
like spanish doorways, or your pale back against
my hands. for all i know you've become a shark:
i am dismantled

by the thought of your mouth. i go to work. i
go back home. i go to soirees where i stand
numbly in the umbra of my own silence.
once, i think i see you

across the room, but it's a mirror. you look
so sad, so thin, i almost want to reach out,
to get you a whiskey, to forgive you, though
i've forgotten how.

do you remember me before you? it's not
my party so i can't cry if i want to.
a femme crosses the room to chat me up.
i don't really feel

like being alone. she takes me home. she takes
my hand and presses it to her chest. *i don't
remember how to do this*, i say faintly.
your name fumbles out

of my mouth like blasphemy. she forgives like
a saint. listen, i won't tell you the details,
just that she was merciful, and when my eyes
closed we became dusk.

LOST LETTER IN SAPPHICS

DANIELLE CADENA DEULEN

you visit my paper-thin house, my name etched
 into the door, but i've moved to a burrow
where i sleep curled in the roots of a hemlock.
 i'm waiting for June—

for the lunar moths to hatch and rescue me.
 i lie. no one knows where i am. the hornet's
nest in the eaves must be empty now. you write
 to say there's a field

of horses that breathe like i do in my sleep.
 you mean it tenderly though i never hear
them, so buried in my burrow. foxes sneer
 near the trunk above.

this landscape is merely emotion, someone
 else's thought of distance. the page slips from your
hands. you forget what you were writing, that you
 love me. the letter

disintegrates into the dark. you walk to
 the door with a lit candle, lift it to see
the carving, now just a symbol you don't know.
 you run your fingers

across the curves of my forgotten name, my
 collar bone, my spine, each time i opened my
door to let you in. i pull my sweater shut
 to keep from shaking.