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Rosalie of the Sharp Teeth

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ROSALIE OF THE SHARP TEETH

Katie Price

Within the orchard of beheaded trees
lives Rosalie the beheader, gifted
gnawer of all things taller than she.
With regret for each emerald leaf drunk
on emerald, she makes her gnawing music
with sharp teeth and the gnawing sharp teeth

demand. Down shake muscadimes, limes, her teeth
dulling, crutched by their greed, till down fall the trees.
Each music spirals into a thinner music,
sacrificing some tooth, though she remains gifted,
her lost tooth pale in the shagged bark. She's drunk
on the silver of each snail's secret history, she's

sawed through to rings long since forgotten, she
is, among restless mouthfuls, grateful to her teeth.
Each ring, each face abandoned for new faces, drunk
away by the roots' own need for drink, each tree's
secret so entangled in its roots and each root's gift
for remaining unseen—the whole orchard's slow music

whispers in her ear. She makes her own music,
till her last tooth jiggles free, jags from the soil, and she
stands among tiny white monuments, porcelain gifts
pointing toward her so convincingly she forgets they're teeth.
It becomes for their upturned praise, not for unmasking trees,
that she gnaws. She forgets the old music, too drunk

now to sense that it's her own blood making her drunk.
That the orchard is edible despite her music,
and her music contingent on the surrender of trees.
They fall out of silence. Haven't I fallen, she
asks them, far enough?—She lies on a bed of her own teeth,
recoils from the wide sky she's made with her gift,

the sleepy blue dome. Now she can't sleep—this gift
is to lie beneath the heat that makes her feel drunk.
This glare that's lost its filter of leaves, as the teeth
bore in her back—Is it an owl lifting that music,
but partially, abashedly, and is it for me?—She
rolls her head through the splinters, toward the nearest tree—