

LAURA WILHELM

Alopecia



Poetry Contest Runner-Up

I never told you
how much I admired your scars.
How I wanted to count them,
trace them, map them on myself
so we could read them
by lamplight in your living room—
a bottle of gin between us,
our sober shadows staining
canvas walls. We could watch
them fade then struggle
to remember where exactly
they were. Study the skin
stretched over our sternums,
lost without the fibers' direction.

I never told you
how I felt that day in April.
My conference heels clacked
on the pavement. You had
a story to tell. There was nothing
domestic about us. Peeping
sunlight struck the mulberry footprints
you left on the carpet, and you looked
at me like you could finally see
that speck in your iris—the one I always
looked for. Something both present and absent.

You told me
there was nothing
wrong with your heart,
and I told myself
that I thrive in small spaces.
I don't need much.
But I would have outgrown a mouse hole.