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The Serious Blues Tracy Philpot

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Tracy Philpot

THE SERIOUS BLUES

Last week shrunken birds stuck in my throat. If I opened my mouth they griped out some fearful song sounding escape now that it is spring. Instead of singing, I snuck up on a squirrel making him freeze in the crouch of an apple tree. He held in his mouth a young bird. As I closed in on him, divining to him the ethics of cannibalism, I realized he held only a ratty pair of socks. We should not have talked about marriage when he was still married. Later, the only thing I wanted was to listen to symphonies recorded in Amsterdam. This is both a lie and the only true thing I will ever write: the choice between ornate rituals or incomprehensible music. Spring gives permission to spout all the clichés about the greenness of this particular thing, the amazement the flowers wear when they see you coming down the sidewalk, and the motherhood in your breasts growing generous towards the small violets back by the laundry lines. This is the most beautiful time of rain, when your life hurts to wear it, not out—then it is easy to fake your luck—but home, where it really sits on you, reading in bed, unable to turn the music off without getting up, so busy ignoring. And in the end slightly before the raucous birds start the morning the pain fits next to you.

On the day after my twenty-eighth birthday, I received a letter from my mother whom I never knew. She told me, "When you were born you had violet eyes." I wonder why this detail wasn't enough to make her keep me with her. These days all our borders have personalities: all the interesting things, such as the fall, happen when we leave each other.