

Sean Thomas Dougherty

All Beautiful Things Mourn You Who Stood Alone

I walk over the stubble of the dead, after the night shift at the factory of longing and without consolation from anyone I leave. I hold the dogwood. I won't forgive the sunflowers. I won't forgive the tulips who called to you at the train station. I won't forgive the black earth, or anything that grows. In my hands a knife and a flashlight, I am searching for your bones in the backyard. I am seeing calligraphy in the heat lightning that crashes across the sky. I am a footprint and shovel. I am a yellow cab waiting outside a house with no lights. I want to eat the dirt with my teeth and spit out glass. I want to eat leather boots and coal I want to dig up the back yard till the neighbors call the cops and come guns drawn asking as I lift the spade to the night to dig for the moon. The neighborhood graffiti's your face. I find it stenciled in doorways. It follows me on the road. I witness it at every exit. On the banks of every lake. On the trestles and the three bridges. On the Susquehanna and the Allegheny, the Ohio, the Detroit River and carved into our cherry tree: high up in the blossoms veined as arteries, streetlights, headlines—to the sound of traffic over the back yard, you are a lullaby. You'll bring light and bees. I am to blossoms like a child is to fragile. To become other. How sometimes it wasn't drugs. A word soft as opium breathed in the window of a Laundromat where the lost clothes are tossed in a bin. To be found never lasts forever. And you are the chair I sit upon. You are the table and the ink and the child's broken truck and the gushing fire hydrant water. Or the point right before. You were. That is enough. This is how I measure loss: I map the lines across my face. I watch the neighbor children grow. The day you died I was reborn as someone

else beside the river in our parked car your voice fireflied, it flared
and failed, briefly. The curtain pulled across the moon shined so
with human loss I left so long ago. I drank vodka from a paper cup
until I burned in the furnaces I can't stop feeding—

*Sean Thomas Dougherty's 13 books include the forthcoming All I Ask for Is
Longing: New and Selected Poems 1994-2014 (BOA Editions), Scything Grace
(2013 Etruscan Press), and Sasha Sings the Laundry on the Line (2010 BOA
Editions). He works in a pool hall, and teaches part-time at Cleveland State
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