

Sara Ryan

## Woolly Bones

*You get one day to dig*, the farmer said, *the harvest is here*.  
This could have been the cornfield on the corner where the white  
dog barked at cars. This could have been my sister's cigarette  
hiding spot— in the skull of the beast.

There's a mammoth in Michigan. There's tusks in my backyard.  
There's vertebrae in my teeth. This could have been  
the mud in my basement.

Once, a deer left its head in a hayfield off the road.  
With a shovel, I hid it in the trees.  
I polished its ribs with bleach. This was a death I knew.

Maybe the mammoth was hungry, or cold, or ancient, or sick,  
or so sure it was dying and the raw field of green seemed  
like the right sleep, seemed like the right spot to fertilize  
the crop—but maybe killed, by spear or arrow.  
Kept in a pond as a prize. The bones showed signs of butchering.

Those soybeans must have burst from the ground the year they planted.  
I wonder if the farmer questioned that first grassy crop. Doubted  
how the corn was sweetest the next year. Knew how mud ran  
so deep it hit bones, how water pooled there in the heavy season.

Noticed how the rain knew where the thirst was, or how sometimes,  
when he tilled the fields, the dirt flew through the air  
like fur.