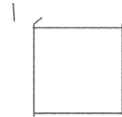


LAURA GROTHAUS

Mentor

They say it wafted
augury, dropped
coins, was dredged
from beds of dulse,
neglected to maintain
a face, at once
maelstrom and
girdle, snaking bites
lioned, goated,
shaped its intentions
to fit its skin, twisted
arms around it,
twisted within arms
though touch was reproved,
ripened new limbs,
shook three heads,
husked its wants,
and no good ever came
of a thing without steadiness.
It saved the skins
of oranges so I
learned to save
skins of oranges
lined my lintels and juiced
my grins. It kissed [¶]
who it would and so
did I, had gone
looking for sanction

for a nod and a
testament
to carry under my
tongue. It was
a thing before rumor
who taught me
after rumor to
flick a match
to oil slick. What is
persuadable
is honest.
I wanted it to mean
each thing.



Goddamnit, Laura!

In Oregon, a single silver hair from my father's head
Appeared on the day I found a dead gull¹
with its skin pulled inside out over its skull

I had been recalling my father yelling,
Goddamnit, Laura! when, in my youth,
I mauled the pages of an open book

Goddamnit, Laura! I say when I spill tea
or step on the skin of a rotting gull², when I miss
buses or don't ask the name of the man

asking for money. *Goddamnit, Laura!*
to small decisions and the purgatory
of deciding. When I ask my father,

he tells me gulls³ are the sort of birds who play
by dropping something
then diving to catch it.

