

To the Rabbit in the Dog's Mouth

I have killed animals before a kid with a gun crouched in the woods
or a fallow cornfield I left that kid behind hung up and dusty in a basement
next to the shotgun my father bought the day I was born

She didn't know how it would affect any of us didn't know the small bones in your back
would bend and break didn't know how to spend the whole morning waiting to go back
out and find you again do what she does to any toy

If I had a rifle I'd know how to end your pain the fastest way the most comfortable
for me at least I don't know how it would feel for you

You will find your way into a shallow grave she's been digging for months
a dirty divot your small body only half-fills you will watch me wide-eyed
when I come out to make sure you're still breathing

I will call in say I'll be late a minor emergency when I get in and tell the story
no one will understand how scared how helpless I called every rescue in fifty miles
leaving messages waiting I spend so much of my life knowing what to do

When I come out with the box you will crawl halfway across the yard scurrying
limp-leggedly underneath the lettuce planter then out through a hole in the fence I follow
stepping gently to drop the towel over you your scream cuts through the morning
and I wince as I lift your light everything

At the rescue center you will stare at me letting your legs move in the man's sure hands
not paralyzed he says round of steroids I'll go back to my car and sob not for your pain
but the way it changed four hours of a morning I never expected to handle
something hurt but still scrabbling for life