INVISIBLE CRANE

Too young to be in the trees
but tall enough to hold a rope
in one hand, like a milkmaid

conjures a vinyl suitcase from
miscellaneous handkerchiefs,
white ones grandmother slid

into the pockets of strangers.
Tiny embroidery of three tear-
shaped pears, or were they
grenades: please daub your
cheeks in church with the pin
ready to drop at will. One year

we kept the memory of a crane.
The teenage boy next door no
longer wandered our woods.

His parents became permanent
dark threads in the curtains.
Milk crates piled out back.

The first time you see a crane,
look away. Gaze at the grass
or stare into a damp bandana.

Better clouds hang elsewhere.
It’s never the wings or eyes
but the legs that return to you.
VERSION OF MYSELF IN THE RUINS

We filled a paper balloon with corn syrup
then kerosene. The entryway smelled of shoes
and acquaintances. Somebody shoved her
hands into a damp burlap sack of barley.

Wind like a spigot at the edge of the yard.
Such weather made me violently wistful.

I looked like a widow, or an owl handler.
The birdseed bell had no clapper,
neither deer-proof nor silent. I left both
shoes at the party, armed my way down
a path of dead tracks. Rugged as molasses.
Friendly as a mineral lick. For hours
working elbows through mosquitoes
and those vibrating shadows that bicker
under city elms. I was awful violin music,
phone half swallowed by a phantom carp.

You found me between a box of wires
and a shrub the size of a claw-foot bathtub.

I believed the tracks were a harmonica
we could never hear above ground.