

THE STORY ABOUT THE STORY IN SEVEN STAGES

by Ashley Crout

Then first it was the shadow-bent black in me,
darkening to match your sadness.

And the coil our love made was flame but dead red.
I saw no one anywhere around any longer.

Next, I meant to comfort you. But filling in
my bed it was us and what in me needed

a mouth hungry for my mouth however

unknown to me – you or the need or the end
you would make that would take my ribs

by one, by one, by one.

Third or first, I loved you past my own survival
and so I grew smaller as if walking away

but could not, but would not, but did not.

Fourth, already and again, you left me
as those frightened into cruelty do, or receded
back into the plastic suburbs, and I hated

the whole of me that begged you,
knee-bent, against my abandonment.

Call it fifth but third, I hear a close train.
Its direction and what it carries
are incidental and entire.

Imagine watching it can make it change.
Count the cars.

Six, as the devil's number, as I always
knowing knew better, I anyway chose you.

Seventh and until it is not, a door opens,
closes. A door opens and closes twenty times or more.

It is the same door.