

TW: Allusions to drug use, overdose, and abuse

Daughterhood

with lines from Gabrielle Bates

In my house where love is gentle as the crack of a whip on the soft, now spilt, skin,
a string of girls are shrouded in death, obsessed with the dying and our already dead

desires that we knead between our fingertips. Folding our want over again,
and again our heritage of girlish indifference finds a seat in our stomachs

like an overzealous tape worm, gnawing on clandestine yearning for a semblance
of something greater. Our cannibalistic tendencies applaud our hunger stored

in mysterious bruises. Our absence of potential leads to occult practices
of acupuncture with orange-capped needles stuffed with tar and sweet crystal elixirs

that only lead to a purgatory of numb highness that feels like the slow dysphoria
after blood loss from the blunt blade of a butter knife. The affection of our mother

stamped on the golden filter of short cigarettes. With long, silky strands of silvery
menthol smoke, she exhales her utter exasperation with all things maternal. Her own

insecurities swaddled and then soothingly hole-punched into the sore, flimsy hearts
of her daughters. We lap up the ashes of stale fondness like dual-mouthed beasts,

licking our wounds while biting our own hands. *Without violence, how do I understand my life as meaningful, as if the only tool I had were a knife.* This poor convent of junkies

with our misplaced sympathy for Abrahamic devotion to motherhood
and its occasional overindulgence in disdain, marked by the indent of a blade

on the neck of a child or with the receipt of her stinging caress marked
in correction-red on my face. Here is where we are bound to the stumpy altar,

our necks stretched out to wrathful clouds to witness a sacrifice of lambs who cry
for the child our mother once was, how she can never return to being fourteen

in her father's house or with her mother's last name; before motherhood ground
the mournful sands of her hope for a better life between its teeth. We weep for our own

childish inclinations that beg for salt in our wounds if it means someone will touch us,
will rub the agony into the skin like a salve for our womanhood and make us real;

make us feel human or like hogs latched onto our mother, ingesting her aching regret
and greedily swallowing it as our own overbearing need to save the unsalvageable.