

Letter to Emily Dickinson

Iain Grinbergs

I was a letter never sent, ink like pressed
Bluebells fallen, each period a room

Where the door jammed and a hundred toes spilled
From my mouth. I thought myself

Something plucked, like the pheasants my father caught
In Norfolk, noosed in the garage by a box

Of photo albums and old birthday cards. Emily,
In short, I thought I was tragic—I thought

My life would end by pitchfork in a town
Where queerness was a wounded deer

Never leaping, a dead cuckoo in a cracked
Grandfather clock. Am I discerning now, Emily?

I know there's a certain slant of light where Heaven
Is a seam ripper, gifting gifts of screws in a box

Of rabbits' feet. They thought you mute, like me,
But I know you already knew the game

Was hopscotch with nothing but fatherless boys
With no socks. Still, I struggle with profound

Responsibility—I've visited temples and meditation halls
All across the U.S. but still find myself asking

For merit, tilling my abyss with a bandaged tongue, asking
Why why why the world is not conclusion. Emily,

I don't think you're listening, but I've inherited
Generations' worth of contempt.

I'm gesturing and raging from a pulpit where the audience
Paints themselves in empty pews. Do think me

Still snowed in? Are my daisy chains contraband?
Emily, what if I invited the milkman in?