

KEELY O'BRIEN

THE INVENTION OF WINTER (DEMETER'S POEM)

I taught her
to be careful with knives.
I taught her
to look both ways at the curb.
I taught her
not to walk alone at night.
I thought she understood that I was saying
if death offers,
refuse.

A little wooden box
is tucked into a drawer.
I tip its contents into my palm,
her baby teeth
that I saved as she lost them,
like a broken pearl bracelet,
bone of my bone.
I close my hand and her four-year-old smile
cuts into my skin.

She has gone
back into the nothing that
I drew her from.
At her conception I caught her, miraculous chance,
my body a blind net in the dark sea,
and my daughter the sparkling
fish, hurtling into me,
snatched from the multitude

of the unborn.
Now she slips
through the fingers of her life.

In the garden
the daisies beam and nod,
the morning glory trumpets,
the lavender is heavy with bees,
nothing mourns.
I will slash the petal throats,
rip up the roots,
crush the new sprouts,
to silence the roar of their beauty.
It is not enough.

The future is a long white bone picked clean.