

bird

by Mary-Kim Arnold

1

Small bird, hopping bird, brown bird. One hundred points of articulation in your tiny brown neck.

Raise your small head up to see the sky. Look down to see gray stone.

2

We went to Madrid and walked the city streets. Even at night, the city pulsing.

Behind the plaza where the men played music, we found a store that sold only springs. From floor to ceiling, on every surface. In boxes and in drawers. Great silver springs. Springs of copper. And springs you could wind around your smallest finger or hold in the palm of your hand where they might glisten like fallen stars.

3

Your mother is a great and dying bird. Once, she tended her grand feathered nest. Once, she preened.

Now the bones of her spine have fallen beneath the weight of decades, her neck bent in pain for which she no longer has words.

Flightless bird, broken bird.

You lift her from bed to chair and then back again.

So light now, so fragile. Such hollow bones.

4

You bought a box of springs. You could not help yourself. You were giddy like a child when you spread them out across the wide hotel bed.

The small ones you wound into my hair.

The largest one you rolled across my naked skin.

5

Your mother at the window, watching hummingbirds.

They told her that the feeder was too heavy. The pole on which it hangs is bent beneath its weight.

Sweet pink liquid spilling out onto the ground.

And the hummingbirds hover there: ecstatic, coiled, in constant frantic flight.

