

COREY VAN LANDINGHAM

Orchard

No, you can't get the best apples from the market.
Not those bitter Kazakh strains, the swallow-me-whole ones,
or the unfortunate looking fruit. They must be rooted for like a hog,
face down in the orchard, breathing up soil. This is what plants do.
Easy enough. Not that you have to understand them.
Besides, when the sky hurtled the fruit down no one hushed
or wept. But that's the wrong myth, the one with wings.
The right apples will take you into terror
for a moment and hold you close as a Tilt-a-Whirl
holds your organs up in the air before placing them back,
carefully, into their correct locations. It is desirable
to be puzzlesque, to think about the body in pieces.
Are you brave inside you? You must be, out here in the orchard,
spine to the night, sensing someone standing behind you.
Hear her big gloves as she claps, the slow clap,
as she moves her mouth in concentric circles. You'd forgotten
howling, or what you thought it might sound like.
Her hands start to pluck you; you're a tooth pulled
from the earth, and it is not good and you scream until she stuffs
an apple in your mouth, pushes the tongue back,
not choking your speech, but drawing it down
into her well. The best apples have been tossed there.
You have to bob for them. Quiet. You have to use your teeth.
The best apples are burnout stars getting time off
for bad behavior. They can't ever go back, you know this.
You can't crawl back out of the well. This isn't a myth.
No, you're not crying, you're just playing the part of the ghost.
The audience is sweating you out mid-coitus. Can you hear it?
You're being pushed through the smallest space in the universe,
smaller than a seed, and, I don't have to say it, hush, hush,
you already know, but you won't come out whole.