

CHARD DENIORD

Little Fucker

For Jill Noss, 1949-2011

“The pain is less today,” said Jill.
I gazed out the window at the horses behind the barn.
“How’s that colt doing?” I asked.
“Fresh as ever,” said Mary, the hospice worker.
“Bit me hard on the breast this morning.”
“Sorry,” I said, as if it were my duty to apologize for the horse.
As if I needed to feel the pain of another to know the calculus of pain.
How it cancels out reason and lives on its own as “the characteristic of love.”
How it needles a witness to lie for the sake of truth.
I thought of paintings depicting the torture of saints.
I thought of Job being whipped by the tongue of God on the bluffs of Uz.
I thought of the time I stepped on a nail that pierced right through.
“The pain,” I said to Mary as Jill fell off to sleep.
“The pain each day and silence.
Pain and Silence should be her name,
and Little Fucker too—those three at once.
What do you think?”
“Peggy’s what Jill calls her,” said Mary.
“So, I’m calling her that too,
although I don’t feel she’s a Peggy,
but what can you do.
That’s the name she comes to now
as if she knew it before she was born.