

Maxine Misunderstood

Maxine doesn't only love men's bodies. She wants to grasp the logic of their internal organs. She craves blueprints, circuit diagrams,

sewing patterns. First time she saw *Frankenstein* she wasn't afraid. She wanted to know how the mad doctor did it,

where to get dead people parts, which graves were best for culling, whether a whole family of ladybugs

could live inside those zombie bellies.

When the high school guidance counselor

asked the inevitable career question, she told her all she really cared about was weaving back and forth

between the inner and outer life of people, what you could see, what you couldn't, writing down what she found there,

taking ideas apart and putting them back together to make them more ecstatic.

So you want to be a mechanic?

In a way, she said, and left it at that.

Every winter solstice she watches surgery shows, goes to butcher shops, rethinks people as composites, disparate shards blazed together by sheer will.

She has only to say unravel and her body will unwind before her, unfurl like a curled hair come undone after the ravage.

So much about negative space can be learned
from snow angels, how she imprints slush with the shape

of where she was, then where she wasn't. To dissolve the distinction
between inside and outside take a wrecking ball to a building.

Where do things go after they're unmade: failed marriages,
the minds of the dead, old cells after replication?

Is there a holding place for disappeared things where people can reclaim
everything from nail clippings to abandoned children?

Because she can't stand the thought of her love vanishing,
She keeps all her old boyfriends in a mason jar by the porch swing.

How Mermaids Save the Drowning

1.

Maxine dreams of standup comics
sliding dead down shower walls,
making red capes on white tiles,
as she looks on, envious and alive.

When she was six, he started to confetti
her skin, and night after night he found other ways
of making verbs of nouns, saying
there's a new sheriff in town.

The sheep did nothing, just looked on mirror-eyed
as he dismantled the carefully swept floors
of her inner dollhouse, caused the wind chimes to tremble,
upset the cacti garden, broke with tenderness each light bulb,
then stood aside, cold and separate, to watch her crumble

with the kind of desire she'd seen only in the man
who robbed her melon garden, left tatters
of rind here and there, didn't even care
about the squirrels looking on terrified.