

Black Roses

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Mostly, I travel alone these days, looking
for ways to frame the imperative. Yesterday,

The sign on a garden gate announced in purple
and black: *Please do not let my GUARD dog*

SNEAK up on you! THANKS. And since I was
about fed up with coy exaggeration, this dog

was declassified, and switched into a substance
neither to be feared or trusted. Time to improvise,

I thought. Change everything into an entity
dimly suggestive of itself. Reflections in well water.

Radial rebirth.

For instance, take the night I couldn't identify

exactly what it was that came from behind and
whispered, *Take my picture with the zoom lens,*

but delete the black roses in my veins. Breath
of wine, mind on slaughter—things we just know

in dreams: a familiar mouth around me,
feeding on tenderness and the chickens

whose necks it was trained to wring.

Try to come up with a proper name for that one;

root-nuzzle in the dark before collapsing into
the hide of something else. Even now, I smell

the blood of an enemy as I press my hand to the
cliff and yell, *Halt,* by a spring bubbling through

red clay. Steady now. These five fingers I raise
usually rest at my side. Or given latitude they

might willfully fly off and beckon in another world.
But let's go back to where I touched the ancient

glyph for bear, knowing that *time on my hands /*
and you in my arms was always a dark transfusion.