

Loaded trunk falling down a flight of stairs like choir birds

by Shari Crane Fox

If you must know something, know that all I remember of our first date
was the fifth of big bottom whiskey. Know

that there are things from your past that don't belong
in your presence.

That a bruise is where a childhood should be.

That the man
I saw through the window was only light

rubbing up against a coffee shop pane—
no matter how bright his hands.

While I slept, he sold his last Lalique to buy my ring. He lay behind me
and placed his past against the curve of my spine
where it melted into knives.

Crows climbed across the sky. Below, rust. & more rust.

We had been burning memories, ash in our mouths. Decades
like machetes. Like hips. Or any instrument of torture.
He leans over. Tips my chin.

We were running for years—the edge of our fear nowhere in sight.
When we left Portland, the carcass was still warm.
Otherwise, it was a beautiful

wedding. Pale orchids dying on our shoulders. The water Riesling blue
as the turtles went on swallowing bright pieces of plastic.

Sea weed. Used drink straws. A condom turning in the surf.
He said *The sound of fighter jets is like God turning up the reverb.* He said

There is something about me you should know. It sounded like *gun,*
like *father.*

He invited me to his parents' house.
I use the word house here, in lieu of home.

He invited me in. Grand piano. Silver.
His mother was in the kitchen looking up the meaning of mercy.