

HAYLEY GRAFFUNDER

I Call Her Doom. I Call Her Anya.

A room that is still called the nursery. One of the doors leads into Anya's room. Dawn, the sun will soon rise. It is May, the cherry trees are in blossom, but it is cold in the orchard; there is a morning frost. The windows are shut.

—Anton Chekhov, *The Cherry Orchard*

Doom tosses in bed. Moon slivers ache under her skin,
& simply put, we cannot take another night of dreams—

hers, snaking through a murky water, deep marsh
in her throat, all mud & rot & rain. Mine, their mirror:

dusky eyes involved in some honest sorrow, sinking,
searching for Doom in the unfathomable darkness

of the bog. We have watched so much disappear. Some nights
I see her legs kicking through the sludge as if to swim deeper,

muddy feet the only part I can grab to pull her out
sputtering. Tonight we catch each other awake, peer across

the space between pillows with one eye open like they might
have done once on *I Love Lucy*. There's no way of knowing

anymore—the electricity vanished before Doom could walk,
but I tell her how the episode would have gone, try to drown

out the moon's faint glow with something sunny. She smiles
for a moment, then opens both eyes & the ache is back.

What's left for her to do? Detangle from sheets, greet
the floor with clean little toes, make her way through

the dark house. I follow to the porch, to the night-cold air
as we do when she gets croup. The frozen inhalation

shocks the body, makes way for breath
in a jammed throat. What we cure tonight, I don't know.

Only that we stay a few minutes, listen for the rumble of a train
that no longer runs, insects that no longer hum. Survey

what was doomed to be lost from the start. It's enough, maybe,
to fill up with quiet, frostbitten earth & slip back inside.