

Carrying Capacity

—after your second attempt

Once they'd administered the charcoal drip,
I left you alone at the hospital

and went home to pace, where I couldn't help
but remember that summer after Trace's

sold: bulldozers and backhoes were on-site
already, biding their time till the permits

went through, so I spent my free afternoons
taking the roses (the Edens, Knock Outs,

and Wild Blue Yonders) and transplanting them
from the small acreage to our split-level,

by wheelbarrow and by hand, before they
got flattened. Daily, thorns opened my palms

and my wrists, and the rawhide gloves did not
one goddamn thing to stop them. Useless

nights, I'd pick aphids from my hair and smear
them across the legs of the patio chairs.

I was going to save every last rose.
The peonies, too, I'd save if time held out.

I was going to save them all. After
two hard weeks of hauling and planting,

we'd run out of room in our little slip
of rented yard. I could barely lift

my arms above my shoulders. They all died
anyway, of course, all of them, just slower.

Shock, drought—it doesn't matter. Their roots
grew loose, petals dried to paper.