GIVING UP ALL SHE'S CONQUERED

SIÔN PARKINSON

A noise muffled by blankets and pillows,

a noise she'll never be able to recall in the field of her memory but knows now as she does any of her husband's nighttime cadences.

'What?' she says.

'Nothing.'

'Come on.'

After a drip of more sounds and sighs he speaks:

'Have you ever thought about giving it all up?'

'Suicide?' she says.

It's a big word for them both and it comes out as a reflex.

'No', he says angrily and at himself for his indelicacy. 'No. I mean starting over. Afresh.'

She thinks about this.

In the morning she'll begin flattening their lives with her fists, starting with the children, pounding out the air in their unfired forms, and from the mass making ashtrays that she'll slowly bake with the fiery tips of rolled-up canvases.

'What the hell?' her husband will say when he sees his lumpen sons, and she'll turn to pinch his chubby waist, finding fabric and flesh wet and warm and workable before harrowing over his chest, pulling out muddy handfuls of him and throwing them in balls onto the bedroom floor, each action the very first gesture, and last taking hold of his still larruping tongue and with finger and thumb she'll fashion a family of bees, letting fly each word:

'Can't
we
talk
about
this?'

– *Paint is paint*

and clay is clay, though this a tongue a tooth a brain, a bee, a string of picking things undone, a shitting mess of orange flung to the floor and twenty feet of wall and then the floor, the wall itself she'll pull apart with tools, sticks, knives, trowels, wasting it all – *Broken glass is broken glass,*

an easy give and take, and building building up.

'Giving up is giving in to a fontanelle of new things', she'll say – soft spots that after long will harden over too, edge to edge, and down the track she knows she will undo all of this, all she will conquer she will pull apart again, all-over, all-over, and again wanting it all-over,

Giving Up the Farm for a Debt-Free Future.

She sees herself as Jackson Pollock, his wings circa 1942, big and breezy,

Male & Female,

Gene Krupa and yazzy cornballs, bald, striped and aching muscles, a cigarette in her mouth to stop her jaw from falling open at this new and purple fury.

In the state of spiritual clarity there are no secrets', Frank O'Hara wrote.

Every action is a revelation, she can believe, and sees it in the thinning lines of trailing debris sparking still like lumps of nickel and iron, or a buggy speeding between ash trees and careening over Fire-y dunes, and in the wreckage and through the plumes of sulphur and tephra, she sees what it is she has made afresh:

A hole is a hole.

She hears her name through the mud:

'Parkinson', she dreams.

'Parkinson, you've done it. You've cracked it wide open.'

'Thanks Lee. Yes. I bloody have, haven't I.'