

Qu'ils mangent de la brioche

"Let them eat cake."

—Marie Antoinette

I.

In the beginning, I chased after him. He was
like a wildfire: dangerous, unstoppable,
full of burning rage—and I was a pliant,
watery girl. I tell people
I didn't know any better,
but deep down, I think it was easier to pretend
I had unknowingly thrust my hands into his fire—
that I didn't want to be branded, that I didn't know
that water could be emblazoned with heat. But the truth is:
you don't get second-degree burns from lack of knowing.

It took Marie Antoinette and Louis XVI seven years
to consummate their marriage.
The Queen of France was so unhappy,
she had an affair with a count.
Movies make the King seem boring—
a silly man
who couldn't control his country
or his wife.

He was Marie, and I was the King:
too full of brimming pride
that had begun to etch itself onto my skin,
too full of subsuming vanity
that had turned itself into obsession.

II.

I allowed him to use an iron crowbar to crush
every part of my body that had a link to my heart.

It was all in the name of love.

III.

The King was executed before his wife.
I can see Marie, hair ragged and body quaking,
in a plain white dress,
waiting for her date with the guillotine.
The guillotine must have been like
a bucket of freezing water from the Seine
that burned out her effervescent flame—
a cold and domineering lover.
I know she never said let them eat cake,
but I like to pretend she did.

He was just like Marie until the very end—
desperate for someone's adoration,
waiting for a wave of forgiveness—
waiting for something that would never come.

I didn't want to be like Louis—
I left before the guillotine could touch my neck.