

A Whale's Heart

There's a sadness that smells
like rose water. It's my father's
hands on the receiver, his voice, how his own
father just can't find the words
anymore. *If you give him time*, he says, like a slow
climb, the single-stroke engine sputtering, spilling
oil; falling behind. *When you're deaf, sometimes
you just stop* listening; I understand, how
sometimes it snows inside the skull; how much
like wind, like nothing. How lovely these
fingerless gloves sewn; how inevitable. My
grandfather once said you can hear
a whale's heart from over two miles
away. How much sound must dissipate
through the wavering quiet; the medium. How
large the ventricles must be.
How, in the old country, his family distilled
the petals pulled from their rose
garden. As drink, or drug, or perfume
applied to his own father's ears each
night, before prayers; how the burns came
in a blacksmith's fire; how small the scar
left, how easy to see then
what was lost.