Primer

The girl reads neighbourhoods of dog, cat, sister, brother, mother, father, houses lit with yellow sunshine and once upon a time glass slippers, and long-toothed wolves.

The girl does not know yet
the broken world,
that there will be pages for *consequence, coercion, fraudulence*.

Outside her room
the sky is an X-Ray pinned to light
armies of birds lifting into skeletal shadows.
Softness vanishes in the city
deformed by contagion, fear, vanity.

News stories convulse palsied in the laws of speech. Planes pass over the skyline. Traffic lights change voltage. Damage is quiet

oil slick pools in city parkades
fissured winds, smudge of newsprint.
Elegant hands read the book of lost entries
trace the red glares of exit signs, writing on tenement walls
the veined arms of junkies.

* * *

The girl reads her picture books.

A child's garden of verses.

The alphabet sifts into her ribcage opens her to stars, grass, abcs whole sentences whispering dark.

In the open doorway something cold and distant even adult hands are small against it.

The book left on the lectern brittle yellow pages without context lexicons of disclosure soft imprisonment.

The girl does not know yet how words will hiss

tremble on fuller pages an imagined wilderness an insomniac's tale seductions remembrances forgettingsa wrecked lullaby—fiercely beautiful a deep song of mouth unnaming the known.

* * *

My hands close on empty testimonies until I find that girl—a pocket of held light ripped corner of one illuminated manuscript.

In my dreams I see her
the pages blowing with dormant
terror
as she gathers moon and sky
in her small hands like a mouth-lovely language

that has no word for harm.