

RISHMA DUNLOP

## Primer

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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.

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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.



a 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*.