

**ALISSA M. BARR**  

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**THE POSSIBLE MUSIC OF DOUBT**

Poetry alone is useless. My pen has never restarted a heart or illuminated anything more than the half-vacant rooms of my mind. Even a potato can ignite some dim bulb to see by, given a few supplies: copper wire, zinc nails, and a carving knife. Poetry is as useless as any art, held apart from the living world, lying flat on its back like an antelope beetle trapped inside a darkened box. Inside the skull's darkened box, I trace each movement of my mind like a barn owl, swift-winged with binocular night vision clamped onto each new target. Inside a poem, I become both taloned instrument and target. Here, I confess: I envy the guarded beauty of foam flowers, their glossy heart-shaped leaves throbbing in the wind like rabbits. Watch how figuration figures me. I keep reaching for flora and fauna when I need most to feel human. Here, in Tennessee, I own my kidneys more than my ovaries. See how language allows both distance and intimacy. I keep singing like a starling just before it's shot off its perch. I keep stringing along this familiar song like the violinist as she slides her bow against taut strings during brain surgery, bending sense around music. I am so often struck senseless under the thrall of a song. Yet I, too, need to wring these notes from my hands.