

# Cow Song

By Elena Karina Byrne

*For Thomas Lux*

I heard them, far-off, deep calling  
from behind death's invisible floor door. Their wallow  
metronome from the after-rain mud was one giant body.  
Arizona's yellow arm's length of light all the way  
to my own body standing at the edge of their field held  
me. I moved toward them and they toward me, as if to ask  
for something from nothing, as memory does, each face

dumbfounded ... dumb and found by  
the timeframe of my own fear, surrounded at dusk.  
There was a plastic grocery bag, its ghost body cornered  
small against a tree, and there was a heavy smell.  
Desolation is equal to contained energy now.  
Their heavy bodies slow toward me, my own  
slow inside their circle without kulning.

Kulning is a Swedish song for cows, not  
a pillowcase pulled over the head. Here, the mountains could be seen  
from far away. There's an abandoned physics, a floor door,  
my own head-call herding me, in-hearing nothing but them.  
Bone for bone's female indicates the inside  
of the mouth when singing is grief alone and is curved.

You can't stop shifting no matter how  
slow. It sounds like confusion in one direction.  
I wanted to tell you this in your absence. It sounds like the oak,  
it sounds like the oak of floorboards in God's head.

Source: *Poetry* (September 2017)