The Metal and the Flower

By P. K. Page

Intractable between them grows
    a garden of barbed wire and roses.
Burning briars like flames devour
    their too innocent attire.
Dare they meet, the blackened wire
tears the intervening air.

Trespassers have wandered through
    texture of flesh and petals.
Dogs like arrows moved along
    pathways that their noses knew.
While the two who laid it out
    find the metal and the flower
fatal underfoot.

Black and white at midnight glows
    this garden of barbed wire and roses.
Doused with darkness roses burn
    coolly as a rainy moon:
beneath a rainy moon or none
    silver the sheath on barb and thorn.

Change the garden, scale and plan;
    wall it, make it annual.
There the briary flower grew.
There the brambled wire ran.
While they sleep the garden grows,
deepest wish annuls the will:
    perfect still the wire and rose.


Source: The Hidden Room (The Porcupine's Quill, 1997)