

## What It Is and Where You Find It

I'm admittedly taken by a coastline in winter—sand in cold, dead  
of starlight so readily mistaken for snow. Eyes closed, the charade

only realer: that grating squeak before the give, compact  
more stark—I know there's a science to this. A lilt. Some giving-

over girlishness only my bone tongue can describe slick  
statistic outstanding deviation but a man wants to see

how I'll contend with being called *the same somber* and I say no, not snow  
underfoot, but a mouse, raw comma reeling. Up the dunes

a grackle calls: mateless and every citation at the end of this data  
has a shadow like a fulcrum coaxed from gut-wrench, stomach acid

sleeting up the walls. Doubt red as the reek of beets, true to form  
as when he took me there, unwitting. *I don't just like men—*

I offer. Test low tide's willingness to raise moonglare, water black  
—in this climate?—gendered hurricanes and the femmes

always send me packing?— love men I always do. Each time at least  
two girls faltered: this one, with the brick on her sleeve and the string

of pelicans teasing the horizon as a choker—sooted pearls  
for my girl-slut lullaby, wannabe. I thought *entender* was a word—

I haven't been tender enough to earn it. The joke  
is just before beach's end—the point where the expanse hemorrhages

into something like desert—where the inlet's met as an afterthought  
by anything not-bird, not-reed inundated— a hotel yawns amber—

reflux of glass dotted with the silhouettes of restless strangers  
—stunts the marsh— signals the moment past which wandering

is *at your own risk*. I've gone there many times, though  
not with the right intention. I've been told the joke—

I haven't kissed enough girls to say I've done so with intent. *Not enough*  
*field work*, see. My cruelest words hidden

in cartilage shimmer: *No, not snow—* Binary, bite. Feather mathematics.  
In seasonless red. The bone a charade of its own.