Particular Scandals: A Book of Poems

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Particular Scandals
A Book of Poems

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Amen and Amen

I'm sitting on my front porch by an open window. The breeze, tinged with the copper of coins, will purchase rain by morning.

Inside, my daughter's playing the piano, singing Cohen's *Hallelujah*, her voice rising, the keys stirring sparrows in pine trees and maples.

I want to care about her music, but I'm reading O'Connor, considering displaced persons, the ungodly ways we ruin one another. Banks have ruptured like arteries while CEOs drink Bloody Marys.

Broke, a man kills himself in Chicago. On the page, the priest mentions Jesus. Mrs. McIntyre snaps, says Jesus doesn't belong, damns his name. Their words blaze like Ashley's song, like the light glowing at our front door, drawing a moth.

Night descends around me like a net. The monarchs have long since left for Mexico. They're getting drunk on cheap nectar and spawning larvae that slurp the toxic juice of milkweed. Their cells pack on poison like muscles. When they burst from their chrysalises,
their wings sprout orange—loud and clear—proclaiming to every hungry predator how terrible they taste. Hallelujah.

And other butterflies are question marks.

The pearly punctuation etched like a hieroglyph on their hindwings. Their curvaceous edges silhouettes of every explanation we seek.

Pain is my appendage again.

(Surely, I’ve done this before). Sutures from my sixth surgery sting. Within the house, my husband calls the dog, her tags jangling like the crickets.

Ashley sings on, as though her breath’s no longer her own, absorbed now in benediction. Our amen un-broken, like a world without end.
Confession

Mark 5:24-34

And in the twelfth year, there was still
blood. And so many difficult degrees
of separation. Everything, at this point,
burned. The once-soft skin of her labia.

The pathetic pulp of her womb.
And the mass of hard questions.

Pressing on her like the crowds
bearing down on him.

She knew the rules: Keep your hands
to yourself. Whatever you touch you foul.

But she reached for him anyway.
Fastened her un-
clean fingers, tipped
with outrageous nerve,

onto the lip of his cloak.
While he sensed the tug

of the siphon, the precious liquid of his power
tapped, she felt her river of red
drain, the fierce spear of her pain
withdraw.
He wanted to know who grasped such scandalous and particular faith. Never again would she soil a place where she lay. So she fell at his feet. Confessed.