Constraint

Julia Mishkin

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CONSTRAINT

"I hate constraint. It's like the sight of blood."

—Luis Bunuel

It's like this: New York
murder victims always fall face up
and they always wear
pearl gray hats.

When you try to write a letter
you spend hours
on the date, Thursday of Jealousy,
Tuesday of No Regrets:
they're still the same.

(You're standing at the top
of a staircase. There's a woman hanging
wash in the courtyard. The plants
weave like sea anemones in the garden.

No: you have the hands of a musician.
You are chopping wood. If the tree
were to fall in the wrong direction
you'd lay yourself down
like a worn carpet.)

It's this Trojan gift of summer, perfectly
groomed but full of lies. It brings
out the worst in you, and like a fig
rotting from the inside the sun

only makes matters worse, coming
up, going down, whispering
about the wilting ivy and lack of light.

As if by following a man you could
learn everything, how he breaks
the necks of cigarettes, drinks his whiskey neat, relies too much on luck

when crossing the street. By the time you round the corner
you find him face up and fallen, a letter clutched in his left hand.
This is everything.
It's addressed to you.