Entendre

Karin Schalm
She wraps red flannel dipped in camphor around her knuckles. An amber ring dimples her middle finger, poking through the homemade bandage, shining in the fire light.

Her name means "Destroyer" in English. She has learned to call the ring her "resignation." Its cold metal band sends a sting up the left arm to her breast. Pain knots up like sea weed clumped tight around stone. She took scissors to her shirt down at Beaufort Coast, thinking the operation simple. And why not? Hadn't she chased the giant with just enough pluck to make him tumble off the edge of the world?

Two sandhill cranes tear her coarse sacks piled high with imported rice for winter. The large cinnamon-colored birds sing as if they had marbles rattling in their throats. Their song becomes a race, the gurgling tune running faster until a creamy film covers their grain-stuffed beaks.