Sestina for Rachel
Heather Tanner

Behind bangs her blue grey eyes and inside
that cloud of her cigarette smoke there’s a history
of dry riverbed memories I still don’t know
my way through, stacked in mesas. See
sometimes it’s hard to walk around with a heart,
hers on her sleeve like rank, mine tucked in my mouth like a blade you can
find it if you know where to look.

Tell me what do you see when you give me that look,
like I’m some stray dog you’ve brought inside.
This girl she feels words with meaning and hears with her heart.
She takes my breath to the ground pressed hard on the asphalt elbows pinned
to a future without my history.
She has faith by the pound in unfounded promises she’s willing to wait and see.
Drop Your Guard Drop Your Weapons Drop This Tough Guy Routine I try
but I can’t tell her no.

Suspended in the notes I write to myself: Ask For Absolution. I know
I will need it. 72 beats per minute all defiance and pride against her luck,
the girl who swam with snakes and tattooed holy words on her body, between
her beats are sounds like the sea.
Smoking a path through the night she brings the rain inside
hunts a future without my past, offers His stories
as bones and we are not alone with her God in her heart.

These promises I make I don’t always believe like the difference between ritual
and routine. Hitting hard
like it counts I know
I’m swimming against tides against history.
Will I deny you three times by dawn? Be there with me in the morning and look
down my throat under the blanket inside
the blue light what will you see?

Fuck knowing yourself I want to love my neighbor and truly you seem like the girl next door. Taking in strays taking it to heart
I want to speak to you with insight
tell you everything I know
so you can give me that look
like you already knew, saying you don’t waste your time with history.

I have ears let me hear His stories
in your words through your books of poetry. I want to see what ever happened between Lilith and Eve. I’ll listen quiet sit still and look out the window past your yard past the freeway off where it’s dark, I’ll try hard to let go of that life because there are no streetlights out there where the dogs wander at night. And I am safe and I am yours. I’m inside.