How to Make a Beginning

Aubrey Ryan

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Abstract
Winner of the 2012 Booth Poetry Prize, as selected by Linda Gregg.

Keywords
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How to Make a Beginning

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Wedding gowns are hard to sink in creeks. They float downstream like bloated geese. They sag in knuckled reeds along the bank.

Pretend that it’s a skin. Pretend that it’s the slit belly of a wolf and lay the pebbles in. Then tie the sleeves and tie the hem, and let the grey weight take it down. Be naked as a fish when you return to town, and take the thick church steps two at a time. It’s true:

your guests will gawk. But you are day and peonies. You curl like lichen: fierce
and tight and singing alleluias
to the dirt. They say a bride
can see the next tornado
in her dreams. They say
we let the wind loose in our blood. To wash
us new, they say we’ll have to wait for flood.

Aubrey Ryan’s work has appeared recently or is forthcoming in Best New Poets 2011, Quarterly West, Squat Birth Journal, and Cellpoems. She lives and writes in Iowa with her husband and their son.