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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

wedding dress, fowl, weight

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How to Make a Beginning

Aubrey Ryan

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

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.

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