Exercise

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Shrike

If you ask me to be
I am always hungry for the spindle.

Savage bird, and small,

I am your bread and butter.

Mammal or anything
with fur. I was self-satisfied.

I was smug in the sweet rot,
even happy. Even poor.
Even stubborn in my mornings.

My kind can hollow a whole hill. Gnaw
our teeth right in the jaw.

Your own bones take no practice at all.

If I wanted to be symbolic about it
I’d beg for the barb of a yew.

We both know I’m game for any sharp thing
when you lift me up.

Exercise

Lake Michigan’s
not a photo op
like lakes in Washington
State. It’s blunt and flat,
a worker in a hard hat,
and those who swim it
become Midwestern,
glossing over
a depression so old
no one saw it coming.
The woman crawling
to the breakwater drags
a blow-up buoy:
note swimmer,
it signals tonelessly.
The lake shifts
its plain body,
paying no mind
to any of us.
It is not the result
of divine intelligence;
a glacier had to move
from A to B. Imagine
that determination
as beauty.