

Hangnail

Love is elastic, she says
stretching her arms to demonstrate.
You look more like Jesus on the cross, I reply,
like love is sacrificial, maybe.
Hm, I don't think so, as she picks at a hangnail.

You don't want to be my piéta?
Let me throw myself across your lap in dying anguish?
A hint of a smile peeks through
from behind her clouds.
I prefer you doing other things on my lap.

The piece of nail finally comes loose.
She drops it on the floor without second thought.
I make a mental note to pick it up
and throw it away before leaving.

This is my piéta love,
picking up wordlessly after her storm,
folding sheets into hospital corners
and crumbs into trashcans
and books back onto the shelf where she loosed them from
in a fit of inspiration.

Choking on bile when I think about others
doing the same for her.
Somewhere in her building, someone
is vacuuming a carpet.
Something white and gray and soulless, probably.
The ethereal buzzing lacing in
with the rattling in my brain.