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The Girl Who Wanted to Speak Other Languages*by Elizabeth Oakes*

Since she was born on a farm,
she wanted to speak cow,
especially when they lay
in sunshine on the distant hill
beyond the oil well.

Then she wanted to speak wild rose,
the one that grew below the barn,
and it seemed to speak to her
of all she could not yet have
or know, but she couldn't
speak to it, even of it, for years.

Then she wanted to speak orchard
where pears turned the ground gold,
where yellow jackets swarmed,
where she couldn't go alone.
Years later, grocery stores were safer,
and she forgot this one.

Others she never forgot—the pond
with its lace edge of scum, the hoof
prints of cows and horses along the edge
making a kind of writing.

The hay, too, that clung to her father
and brothers, tracing into their sweat
as they worked in August
to bring it into the barn,
where notes of it hung
in that cathedral.

And the magic her mother worked
with peaches, tomatoes, green beans,
how her small hands turned them
ever more beautiful—shining in the cellar,
luminous on the supper table.

Listen, the world said,
Listen!