Antidote
Corey Van Landingham

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Valediction Lessons

Though it looks like it should be named plague,
   a gathering of starlings making the sky grow dark

is a murmuration. I once thought the word singed
   was really sung, and now there are no new animals

left to be grouped and named something romantic.
   I once thought language a gift. I am learning different

   techniques for survival, what to call each black wing.
   In a documentary, lions gather around some carcass,

looking hungrier as they feast. The sun momentarily
   blinds the camera, so that when I can see again

the legs have already been devoured. Yet the spines
   underneath acacia leaves prick predators’ tongues.

The small ridges on kudus’ horns are formed to lock
   together during mating season’s battles. Tonight, love,

I am crying out your name into another man’s mouth.