

Note to a Dead Girl

Claire Cristoff

You planted the tree
in my front yard—
sugar or paperbark,
it doesn't matter—
with gnarled roots
and boughs for squirrels
and snowfall.

I never knew you,
but I picture you now,
parting the earth with
careful fingers, long
hair obscuring your face,
soft young breasts
already gravid with rot.

Years later, a woman
arrives unannounced
on my doorstep—yours—
to admire her daughter's
sole descendant, impervious
to chainsaws, band saws,
and bitter January.