

Stephanie Ford

Portrait with Instruments

We joysticks, ringtones, barometric coronets

pressed like lungs in a leaden vest.
Let's trust our heads to invade and revise

what hammers, pings, and plucks us,
to see and speak of mere appearance

as rainwater inks the alder's wrists,
lusts the downspout's tin acoustics,

spoons us our daily dose of peril—

as in, even while the ceiling leaks,
our rented house falls soundlessly down

in strands of pith, in cone-shaped drifts,
and after we harvest the martyrs' wings

we bring them to our lips.
They taste like air given form and heft,
as, after the earthquake,

the too-much space between tables and chairs
swallowed the opera

of our own pent breaths.

True Survival Story

To a boundless
aloft
I

cross a trestle, fall
not for yonder
up and up

azure as

as air so wide
and so

to prospect,
pitch me easy into

a lexicon maybe,

hitch mind

to low and kind
exactitudes—

rock, pinecone,
this,
your,

earthworm, please

any ballast,
grasp.