

Ursula Caesura

If not for the girl I named *new*
shoot, green heart, easy mark,
I'd have had nothing to offer the gods,
nothing to distract them from the chokehold
of final bell, small fists
to plexus, breathless, the head – *not yet* –
think *why did I not see this coming* –
skull on brick, (*how did I not*).
So I gave them Ursula of the odd haircut,
defenseless in plaid, new to our school,
ready for friends, a face open,
and mild as a saucer of milk.

If not for me she might believe
the globe on teacher's desk dependable,
and that God— season-maker, star
blower, thunderbolt thrower —
still lives somewhere above Polaris,
distant maybe, but there.

Ursula of April face and lambs, unfashionable
wool cap, of the Little or Lesser,
polestar of dark ache,
forgive me for not knowing
I had more choice than to break
or be broken.

You are standing, still
where I left you, your back
to the fence, a bruising black iron
number into which you'd been shoved.
Your face caught in the instant
of understanding, the moment you saw
the awful truth of it all.

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