The Garden

Tara Goedjen*
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The chains of the bike knew where the good soil lay
And clamped their iron jaws down upon her hand that day.
Her skin peeled away like bark, leaving slender white stems
Opening up to red bubbling buds that Father knew
Where to plant, and to the hospital he took her away,
The exposed flesh trailing crimson petals across the ground.

The hospital jutted up before her, a glinting glass house
Through which sunlight sprayed across green tile.
And inside, the garden grew tangled and wild
With bulbs, the ladies’ bulging bellies, and brown velvet
Cattails with their scruffy faces and thin slanting spines,
Little flushed faces of the dianthus spread round the floor,
The dip of a woman’s pink shawl, a drooping coneflower,
And shocked faces of blood-splattered Candy Lilies,
Forget-Me-Not purple in the corner for wilted leaves,
Bristly busy nurses, pointy Scotch Thistles scurrying in the breeze
Past tiny dandelions coughing storms of white wispies.

And here the child’s finger bouquet of wet roses was lost
In the beauty for a moment, the gardeners rushing around
In white robes with shiny silver tools, spades and scissors
Snipping round faces stitched in pollen gazes with blank black eyes.
Cutting and trimming the doctors worked, backs bent over
All the while, wearing white to catch the red, red soil.