

EMILY BANKS

Queen Anne's Lace

I used to rip it up
out of the ground and chew
the leathery taproot,
which tasted like a carrot
but felt like wood
inside my mouth and had to be spit out
into the grass. More of a party trick
than anything—I was proud I knew
the secret of the root,
what hardened pragmatism lies beneath
the feathered, dainty white.
They say Queen Anne once pricked
her finger with a needle
sewing lace; that's why
at the flower's center you can see
a tiny drop of red. The violence
of creating such an intricate
pattern, petals so delicate
you have to stare up close
to see them each as individual parts.
I didn't care
if dirt got in my mouth.
I'd throw the plant, flower and all,
into the roadside ditch
and saunter on. Some herbalists
still recommend the seeds
for birth control. Chew up
one teaspoon every day.
The volatile oils they contain
will slick your uterus
so the egg has nowhere
to hold on. She pricked her finger bloody
making lace—was it an accident?
Or was she bored
with her own nimble digits,
glass-smooth skin? Did she just want to see
what would happen?

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Emily Banks is the author of *Mother Water* (forthcoming from Lynx House Press 2019). Her work has also appeared in *Cimarron Review*, *Superstition Review*, *Yemassee*, *Free State Review*, and *Muse/A Journal*. Emily is a doctoral candidate and poetry lecturer at Emory University. She lives in Atlanta, Georgia. Online at emilyabanks.com.

HERON TREE

7 April 2019

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