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# KNEELING DRUNKARD'S PLEA

CHRISTINE DEGENAARS

Kate, I called you today  
but you didn't answer. I counted  
each ring and the seconds it took  
for the silences to break into another.  
Kate, I counted.

Kate, if you still lived  
in Tennessee would you have answered?  
Would you have smiled on the phone until  
your teeth touched the receiver? Kate, I bet you,  
if you still lived here, you would.

Kate, I was calling because I've spent  
the whole day with Diana and her words—  
I feel like her words are swallowing up mine.

It's like those mornings after we curdled the night  
talking, twirling your words up in mine until we didn't know  
who's was which. Remember how rough our throats felt,  
pickled and barbed, don't you remember?  
Kate, I was calling because you have to remember.

Kate, Diana has cinched up my words. Diana's swallowed  
me. Kate, Diana says you're still here—that your eyes  
are in each rosary bead and your smell is in the carpet.  
Diana says you smell like my carpet. Kate, tonight,  
I've found you in the carpet. She's stolen my words.

Kate, I'm sorry. Tonight, I took my oxycodone  
and I didn't read the label—no, I ripped the label and the pills  
pricked and barbed my throat. Kate, when my nose touches  
the carpet, will you still kiss me?  
I called you today and you didn't answer.  
Kate, I'm sorry.