

Miner

That Friday in July the midwife quick-parcelled me
bloody in a blanket. Five days
until they'd show me to my mother.

Tuesday, father cradled me in. *Show me*
she wailed. He revealed my splendid night pelt
extra thumb, star nose. She
kissed them, weeping. First week of October
they filled my wheelbarrow with earth, dimmed lights
delighting at my squeals in the tender dark, my first dig.

By my third birthday I was abroad in neighbours' gardens
breathing my own expired air, making little craters.

Around midnight father would wave, dancing
with a torch for me to find him, his smell all smoke-weed
his clogs drumming me home. Mother's sweet scent
with me always, deeper than I could tunnel.
The vibrations of her steps were nursery rhymes. Then
I was gouged out for school.

That first week I learned to make myself invisible.

Cats owls and buzzards ruled the air.
I masked my skilful hands and savage bite
learned the language but kept quiet.
Served twelve years of din and glare
snout flaking, whiskers twitching
sore eyes all itch and seep
seeing nothing, understanding nothing
missing mulch and earth and calm and clay.

Nicolette Golding
1st Place in the Open Poetry Category
2021 International Competitions - Wells Festival of Literature