

SPELLBOUND

A fence of nails weaves between rocks and small metal stars
and transistors that look as if they could stand in for humans.
A frail skeleton, elegant as a dressmaker's dummy, leans, illumined,
against the window pane, slightly out of scale—
and exactly right. Summer congeries arranged on a pantry sill.
The easy symmetry delights me each time I pass, as if beauty could be
captured that way, reaped from the beach with a haphazard
sweep of the hand. *L'art brut.*

In the small residues of light the year has left to us,
I reassemble these objects on a white cloth.
For balance, I close the fence and the light throws the shadows
of the nails in and out of the bright core like a braid of thorns.
Shored, the skeleton rests on the nail heads, opaquely white.
The austere photographs I make delight my artist son
because of their composition. They scare me.
It's something about the high contrast, he assures me. But it's not.
I'm not sure anymore what I want to wall in—or out.
I'm not sure it's under my control—any more than my own skin.
Touch me and the nerve ends flare like a wreath of flames.
But these photographs augur something worse. I can see how it folds back
into the shadow, perfectly inviolable, like the self
constrained to the brain pan. I do not believe God
intended us to live so closed away from one another,
I whisper at the altar rail and a priest wreathes my head
with her cool hands and whispers the prayer I never dared:
Feed her darkness.

