

Words our breaths our bears

You drink water and your mouth is a room
with a window left open.
I know because I just swallowed
the porch air from your throat.

We speak sealed, mouth-to-mouth
words let in like moths locked
to lampshades.

Words want to bed down, to burrow
in inhales, shift the straw,
knead circles for curling up.

Say *stay* and it does. Say *story*

and my lungs are rushed by the black
bear that stalked the cornfield chased
your ten-year-old self.

Does that same bear burrow down
and bed your creek this winter—
its hibernating heart rate a slow climb
of stairs?

I lost track of the length of days
but now our pulses align—I know
because you told me, because

your speech is meant to be swallowed,
shut into the den of the body,
kept until the seasons shift
and even then, screened in and leashed.