

To Skin a Rabbit

i.

There is no need for the knife, just now,
for you will hope to find it has already strangled
in the wire trap having kicked, throat first,
into the patient sliver of moon-waning metal,
or perhaps raced panic to the end of its twitching heart.

ii.

If neither of these is true, find a heavy, flat stick.
The natural tendency will be to pause just before the blow,
but follow through, swift as a thief,
or you will merely stun it into death-deception
and skin it alive.

iii.

Slit the belly and swing it by the ears and feet
until the autumn leaves shudder under the scattering of entrails.

iv.

A seasoned harvester's hands should still be clean,
but if you are not certain the cavity is empty
reach inside.
The lungs and heart
tend to linger.

v.

Take a bite of the heart to ensure next year's hunting fortune.

vi.

Peel its fur back from the shoulders
as you would take a jacket from a dinner guest,
a mourning shawl from your weeping wife.

vii.

Regard your hands, how the lined palms tell
of your capacity for catharsis, for a whole other
wilder-life molded from brambles, graying denim,
and bone,

Kate Sweeney

which, come to think of it, you should move to next,
breaking each hind quarter at the joints.
This will help the fragile flesh slip
from the body.

The skin is papyrus.

iix.

And you are the tear.