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## Case Studies in Revenge: Philomel Gives Advice

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JEANNINE HALL GAILEY

*Case Studies in Revenge: Philomel Gives Advice*

Trust me on this.  
It turns to ash in your mouth.  
(The cold air glitters above me.  
I know what I know.  
I've tasted blood.)

Like this one guy I knew who was in love with this girl—  
a tiny, 90-pound thing who was always getting beaten up  
by her boyfriend, who was seven years older  
and huge. So one night this guy  
(maybe sixteen, ghost-white, only 140 pounds)  
waits outside the bar  
where the boyfriend works  
as a bouncer.  
He pulls the boyfriend into an alley,  
pushes him to the ground,  
stands over him  
with a metal bat.  
Tells him he should kill him.  
The boyfriend starts to cry  
and the guy thinks, "Pathetic."  
He still wants to kill him  
but won't. The boyfriend pleads,  
promises he won't touch her  
again. The girl later complains  
to this same guy that her boyfriend  
won't return her calls.  
(The glint from empty beer cans  
still stacked on her dresser.)

And this other girl I know,  
there was a boy who picked on her  
in school, called her names because  
her mom shopped at the wrong stores,

she ate lunch with the wrong people,  
had the wrong accent, etc.  
She hated him and prayed  
he would die. Two years later  
he gets thrown through a windshield.  
His best friend got leukemia.  
She alone survives. Now she's afraid to hate,  
but dresses impeccably.  
(She grips the steering wheel with white, white hands.)

And this other woman  
she married young (in a white minidress  
she holds white roses) a man  
who bullied her, threw chairs at her  
and she lived with it eleven years  
and swore when her children were older  
she would leave him. But then she fell  
in love with him again  
(his guitar music, his desire for only white cars)  
and stayed another eleven years.  
Her kids say she's nuts.

When I had my fill  
of revenge, I began  
making music. It tasted sweeter.  
(The air's edge like a knife in my feathers.)