

FRAGILE FABRIC WE MIGHT BE MADE OF

It was as if each breath
had escaped a pouch
stitched *denial*

as its threadbare silk
gave way, the way
her friend shook out

her grandmother's velvet gown
and except for the seams
it crumbled to dust.

Dusk downpour
and the intersection
opened its black book.

One paragraph bled into the next.

In dream, she extracted
gray pearls from between her ribs.
At dawn, clawing leaves

under the dogwood,
her fingers hooked
a bird's withered chest.

She searched its sockets for pearls,
the intersection for a word,
tested velvet ash as a surface

to draw upon.
Only the skeleton
of dress loosed to breeze—
a frame she could enter.

Barbara Rockman