

## Emmaline (1854)

*The good die young.*  
—folk wisdom

Well, our Emmaline is a good girl.  
The scarlet fever may come yet  
this winter, or a lingering  
consumption. We'll keep vigil  
with long, hard bayberry candles  
and watch her wither, weaken, die.

Maybe an accident. Her mutton  
cut just that much  
too large, or a tragic vacation  
to the shore, her mouth  
flowering red on some hungry water.

Limestone is in good taste.  
The genteel often have lambs or angels.  
Our Emmaline would be all fair, wreathed 'round  
with ice and roses, pale as rind,  
cool as cloud, hard  
like marble.

I wonder, would our letters  
go faster on their way  
bordered in black  
tear-streaked,  
smudged  
with the blood red blood  
of our good girl?  
Does Emmaline look a mite peaked  
to you?

—Jennie VerSteeg