

The Door Handle

For Lisa and Andrea Dunbar. RIP.

Adam Lowe

Locked in the bedroom without a handle, all spoons and
knives taken so we couldn't open the door, we kindled

a fire from the mattress. We were young, just being mad kids
burning paper, and the next thing we knew we were trapped.

We beat on the glass, against the window, calling for anyone
passing by on The Arbor to hear us. The smoke snaked

up to the ceiling, an upside-down fountain of grey ghosts,
our little lungs chugged on the gauzy air. Mum only

let us out when she was dressed back then. On a morning,
when she was good and ready. We were locked in our prison.

It was my fault, I think, this time. We weren't supposed to be
locked in but the handle had come off again. And Lorraine

was burning pretty patterns into paper with the matches
when we realised our mistake. Mum should've known better

after what she went through. She should've taken better care of us,
instead of treating us like her own parents treated her.

We were actors reading the same script. You'd never know it,
but we did want to love this place. These streets. Even when we left,

our hearts stayed, chasing each other in circles. Mum died first,
falling in the Beacon on Reevy Road. Then Lorraine got sent down.

In the end I was swept up too, into that memory of Buttershaw
where it never rains, and dogs always play on the green in the sun.