

Paint Yourself a Story
for Sarah Rose Westenberg

Phi Reis

Eight-by-eight, I call it:
eight short stories in eight weeks.
Maybe
I can put a poem in the count.

*Can't you brush up skills in pieces? she asks,
like artists with canvas,
get good at painting the same tree
over and over?*

There are no drills for telling a story, I say,
no numbers.
It's all or nothing.

Your eighteen-by-twenty-four canvas
captures a landscape
like a novel.

A short story
is not a palm in the background;
it is the entire landscape painted on an index card.

And a poem?

That's a story painted
on a postage stamp