Two Odd People Picnic

You don’t wish to speak? We spread our bodies like paper on this pale lawn. Another windy day! Your sailor hat blows away while I laugh, twirling a thick dandelion. It’s the job of firemen to put out what I carry for you like a third wallet, disease, thoughts of you entering sleep like exotic dollar bills. You are preoccupied, lips pressed like a tiny defiant accordion. Soon you will speak prophetic thoughts, murmuring “shooting stars, bad blood.” Your mouth curls, impressive quarter of a moon. I’m drowning in a sea of meadow flowers, stunned by sun. You reach out a hand, thanks, fishlips. The wind is blowing away our sandwiches and my gay facade. You’re wearing your southern charm like cologne on a molting coat, bits and pieces falling. We’ve been together too long for me to impress you with lies of perfumed men in Tangier. I smile behind a veil of white bread, mayonnaise a white star at the corner of my mouth. You laugh like a gypsy, sound of dimes hitting pavement.

—Helen Valenta