

JUDITH SKILLMAN

A Wolf in Her Violin

Her teacher told her she had a wolf
inside the f-hole, beneath the g string, sylph

note crying out when she played. A cough
on her g string, and she—too young for wolves—

their red fur and strange eyes, believed half-
way through the scales, up and down, the wolf

pulling at meat. Those teeth testing how tough
the ground, how buried a voice might become—safe

enough to walk through low-growing shrubs of
the sanctuary? Why bother listening for the other wolf,

which was gray? She'd place one note against itself,
try to tell where the animal lived. She believed

it was true, the endangerment, how, when rough
things happened, as they would, which color wolf

might emerge from the Saint-Saens. Or the bluffed
Paganini, Tchaikovsky, other concertos, riffs

blended like hard liquor, and she a girl, or a wolf,
not sure which. This sly red one or that gray *woof*.