

R. Flowers Rivera

HEATHEN

for K.L.S.

“I can’t save you.” Nature
Tamps the imprint of a rotting leaf
Upon concrete. Her man sighs
And sighs again. “What can you do
With a woman who won’t
Do what you say?” *You love her.*

The snow is falling. I’m cold.
Like her. This weather is both
Pathetic and fierce. *I can’t find words
For what I need.* He
Mumbles. “I couldn’t save her
Even if I wanted.” This, at least,

Is an attempt. There are whole seconds
When the world almost makes sense
To him. His legs scissored between
Hers. Her hips bearing down. Grinding.
Like a pestle against mortar. Once, long ago
He tattooed his name on the inside of her.

A piece of ice is breaking
Free of gable. Right now
He’s asleep. She is about to go in
And wake him. *Come on, boy.
I’ve never taken a cold shower
And I don’t intend to start.*