

VOICES FROM ARBUS' *UNTITLED*

Vanessa Haley

i.

Betty, Halloween

These are my dolls, Tiny Tears and Willa Hedgehog.
If you can guess how many fingers what's the number
behind my back I'll let you hold one of them. The fog
that surrounds me—the blurry trees, the soft blunder
of grass and playground dirt, the sky without birds—
sometimes swallows me day and night, and I try
and try to get to the other side of it, where the words
wait for me to speak them out loud. I'd say *why*
*do you want to take my picture?*⁹ *You look*
at me up close while others keep a distance.

When it's cold I can see my breath. You shook
my hand hello good-bye. We don't have a chance
to meet people from the other world, but the moon
sometimes in the morning comes, a faint white
whisper. Do you like this dress? It's my favorite
one. My heart they say it has a flower wound.
Over the river and through the woods,
over the river and through the woods soon
the horse carried us as far as it could
in the sleigh. It snowed white one day
after the next all of my life, okay? Okay.