

Kevin McNeilly

For Helen Merrill

She does best on ballads.

Smoke-textured whispers,
half-worded quarter tones,

open and come apart,
and as if blush coloured
dusted petals, blow from

a raggy stem, catching
softly fire as they fall
into a small hushed heap.

Listen. This voice anneals
like alcohol's bruised flame
the broken ache of life.