

## The Snake

She loved it, its fat dry-warm un-restless span,  
its lazy undulations—neutral, dry, unearthly, familiar.

One day the snake stops eating, lies outstretched,  
indifferent—so unlike other days, unlike itself.

The girl's mother takes the snake to a veterinarian  
to see what could be wrong with her daughter's

eerie, languid beloved. Hours later, the phone rings,  
startling the jungle silence of the room.

“Here it is, your snake is not sick,” the doctor says.

“It is merely preparing to feed...” “Ah,” says the mother,

over the phone, relief and a question.

“...on your daughter,” the doctor goes on, finishing

a dark sentence.

The silence is scaled and cool around the bed posts.

Trees smelling of daylight melt like sleep  
into the shadows beyond the windows.

The air smells like home, danger, love. The girl

has other interests, but still, at night,

the absence twists and unspools,  
expands like night itself

in the space that will surround her.

## **The Ex**

Disaster struck like a series of storms. Not just one zigzagging bolt of flame in darkness, but rather, a fire, a collapse, a clash, a slow burning knowing.

Will friendship sprout like those green nubs you see pushing up through sidewalk stone, fresh and new, like tiny candles burning on a cake, nurtured then extinguished with a breath, except that no one's singing?

Pay off the debt, return to sender, turn off the light, read to page ten, sink or swim, dance, go under, and when the wave comes, hold your nose, hold your breath.

It's a manatee, not a shark. This is a hand, not a star. This is a friend. The prince has drowned. We will not miss him.

## **For a Friend**

A lover of life and spring, I yearn to go under  
to the darker world, the world of sleep and stillness.

Send me, I pray to the black pines that pierce the sky like needles.  
Send me to where I can search beneath rocks, in fields, in caves

and even in the sliding silver rivers,  
for golden coins and salamanders,

gems, fragrant things, and strange...anything  
of value to bring to this altar where my pale friend lies dozing.

She rides the pain like a bird, dipping under, fainting,  
turning on a broken wing. Her face is turned

toward the window, while I descend into the cold ocean  
willingly, willingly, rising breathless from the depths.

Sputtering and blue, I swim, finless, kicking  
across the dark waves, clutching a sea-worn lavender stone.

I want to make a promise—one that will come true  
like the sun's white beams on the curtains here,

true, like the sea's whitest foam, the breastfeathers of a gull,

a whiteness to break this humming hospital night.

Soon, there will be no window, as she will be standing  
face to face with the day, bare feet brown and bony,

arching like animals on sweet-smelling earth,  
her hands free to talk for themselves,

her hair the way it was at school,  
her face a shining mirror,

reflecting back the lengths to which we who love will go  
for love like this.

## Love

Outside, it is raining.  
T-ball was cancelled  
and my heart broke  
on a rock  
outside your door  
but I picked it up  
and it mended in the sun.  
It mended beautifully  
in the end  
and I spoke some words  
of thanks  
and brought my son  
a milkshake  
that was as pink  
as a baby mouse.

## Travel Diary

1.

Who would have guessed it, the giddy world so dazzlingly alive—open the window, shout into the whipping wind while taking in this winged sense of parting.

2.

Storrow Drive is a rollercoaster, the river a blazing sheet of fire. Sunset tints the city a pinkish nectarine—fiery pinkish nectarine— and then the lightning, along with rain. I'm leaving home, again.

3.

Tilted and hovering, juicy and sheened, the moon is there, while the world is a moss-and-emerald-tinted crazy quilt from way up here—a pillow stitched with ocher—a board to play on—too beautiful to scare us now, so high have we become in this zipping, humming bullet of a thing.

4.

I sip the juice of a tangerine and wonder, dozing, while clouds like torn bridal gowns waft by the windows.

5.

I understand we have been haunted, yet these clouds, now blousy as peonies, lull and dull the whirl of memory, blurring whatever it is I would have wanted to write to you.

6.

There is land. New land, old land, tilting, or is it us who is tilting.

7.

We gather our refuse and throw it away as the flight attendants walk unsmiling down the aisle, trash bags gaping in their gloved, expert hands. We will leave no trace if they have anything to do with it. No trace.

8.

It is recommended that one forgets this in-between, this margin, this unwritten transition from there to here, or here to there, depending.

9.

The heart is left behind somewhat, still catching up while we resume the patter, footsteps, conversations, and welcome the smell of land and water, the languid rustling of the trees, the warming touch of sun on skin, the clean cars gliding by like fish in a polished darkness.

10.

We were born for this leaving and arriving, born for this forgetting, this nonchalance at having once again been spared the price of flying too close to the sun.