Feldspar

In my hand it changes from dull slate to living thing. Sap of some ancestral conifer wrote this turpentine gold, some mammal's uterine steel this blue. The dark seam in the middle

reminds me of a picture my son drew, a squirrel he saw the neighbor kill. It was crossing a border from rain into sunlight. How smoothly that making healed him, icon on our coffee table turned altar, his stuffed animals and Ninjas attendant, a cross of lashed popsicle sticks. Flawlessly present he flowed on into play. For days I was spellbound.

Yet I couldn't stay, ten years later in my father's hospital room. Storm of stillness, his knurled breathing. I sat turning pages of *Tatwas*--ancient Hindu symbols, feeding them through my hand on his arm. Twice slowly through the book, then I placed it on the floor beneath his heart. When I left the room was filled with shapes of penciled light.

The nurse called just after four a.m. I retrieved the book she had sealed in a ziplock and the labored script of the heart monitor tape.

Now I fidget with the lights in this stone. That tiny orange shape

a campfire . . . there, the ice-green angles of a glacier. The rest submerged lucent blues

> miners in the cave forging, foraging along the vein.

Caverna Sagrada

Everything she knows tells her she has to let it go, the hollow place where the baby lived, where the maturing boy struggles, miles away, with words like *liar* and other thorns. This boy made out of light--

how did it happen? who chose to stay with the dark raveling of his father's pain—father who recognized in him the gold thread in a nightmare. While she had been an unbearable glare that showed too clearly the whole loom. Looming. Life looms like a wave in slow motion getting bigger and bigger and you know what it is going to do to you without love.

So the boy knew himself to be the flecks of sun that rode that wall of water, the only light his father could see. How could she turn her back on that?

In the cave of sorrows she sits with the emptiness, rocking it like a cradle. Rocking the poem, trying to get her back adjusted in the lap of the arm chair. Looking at a photograph: the baby glistening in his bath. She had framed it with a special mat that hid his father who held him in the tub: Even in the rage of divorce, she would not cut them apart.

[stanza break]

Now, she goes to bed curled with an ache, lacuna in the midst of a blessed life. Lets herself sag into it like limp cloth. When she wakes the thread is taut. She can stitch the poem over the absence. She thinks of women

in older times whose sons went to war at twelve, whose daughters married into another province, disappeared in a wilderness of world that takes by force, one way or another. Spinning in the wee hours, there is never enough thread to tell these stories, no satisfying way to end such a poem. You can drown forever. That poem just stops.

But there is a boy made out of passion and June sun, given the gift of choice, not required to make any trades.

Here he is in his school photo under a tree on a leafy background. An excellent swimmer, his features a perfect blend of both parents, he is not afraid of the dark.

Green Damselfly

Breaking loose from her mating flight She settled to the naked log in the fugue of Rocky Run, where I lay crucifixed hands and feet in the eddies.

She faced me, perfectly still but for the occasional curtsy of wings. I moved slowly with my camera. Sun played on the log bright as a dance floor. It is I who should bow, I told her. She ducked, clasped harder as the breeze shook her. Yes it's just like that for me too, I said. Long moments

then

she fluttered, settled nearer, walked toward me

black eyes distinct in her emerald head, all of her body, even the edges of the black velvet wings a radiant

emerald: You cannot die, no matter what pierces you.

Soon, she let the air lift her. I don't know how long there were two in their lilting turns then the sound-filled absence.

Oak Chair

The birds this morning, as if they could sing about anything. So we unloaded your mom's oak china cabinet, carried from three states away, as she is

finished with it. It was heavy, and I was heavy but I wiped it perfectly clean, anointed it with orange oil and bees' wax. And the wood sang. *This* I thought *is eternal life*. It made me turn

to her older sister's single dining chair I had asked for, an orphan long dispersed from its fellows. Thin and tall, flowing like a dancer, its shapely contoured seat made

of a burl—that knot where the wood has had to struggle, grain all spun like a storm, fans of blonde curled among black strands. When I finished

it simply shone, its own poem: *This* it said is what you are trying to do. And yes, it is worth it.

Skunks at Twilight

One night when you were a baby, the four-room house on the sheep farm

a whole family of skunks crossed at the bottom of the yard. I watched from up on the porch white stripes undulating a soundless tide, mother and five half-grown kits flowing through the early dark.

I called to your father, you were asleep. This was thirty years ago, we didn't know it wouldn't last. Everything stark with suffering, you a tiny geyser our bolt of enlightenment. And this exotic little family stealing along like the sweetest secret.

I still can't read the sign. *Kundalini, strong attraction and repulsion, self-respect* says the medicine book. I can say this:

They knew where they were going. Their flawless rhythm rolls in my mind, it's out there even when we don't see it, moving like a wave, arriving. We are born to this bold errand, sorting out the darkness weaving in the light while others sleep amid the breathless watchers.