

MIDNIGHT IN THE GARDEN OF MARVELOUS PILLOWS

I'm slicing tiny white tablets
beside my lover's head at night.
He's wearing black-framed glasses
like Clark Kent; naked
and subdued on our marvelous pillows.

I sometimes wonder if he's bored
by now with my shriveling body
but I catch his eyes as I strip
at the tall mirror, and wiggle
into a lace tank top.

It's nice to be his little queen
and yes, he still plays his nocturnes,
still opens windows for mist
as I read, wrestling with memories.
It used to be lying naked on our mattress

I felt my self slip away. But now,
my gasp when the friendly penis rises from its brambly cove
is audible, and he's calling me Zarinda,
the nymph he saw in his childhood
window.

DOE

my eyes canvas your etched pose like a flibbertigibbet
pilfering a style, lurking inside your fresh-faced eye's
unfathomable sensors, integrating forest movements,
behold your plush ears extending height and hearing
like a queen's crown, your dainty limbs beneath your form, allowing
only a peek of your polished hooves, your buttoned tail—

Doe, you are my aim and study, my closest ally.
But must I have been born white-necked, erect, with pillowed breast
to wear the cloven coat, splashed in white paint drops?
What compelling fashion, this, that cloaks your blood's heat,
digestive feats, and simple vagina which defines
the wiles of your aesthetic more than I, mine!

COMING HOME FROM BOSTON

I'm standing on the train platform like a wary cat
avoiding scary men. My boots are dry,
despite the slushy puddles on Dalton Street, Boylston Street...

I don't want to lose time or die
before I've written what's been locked inside.
I'm a talk addict, a talk whore. I can't get enough.
But I'm alone for the next three hours and thirty minutes
so I'll write a million lines tiny across an envelope.

Rooftops etch the white dawn sky.
Most houses seem gray-white, even the red ones.
But the pale blue two-story, suggests a wordless past—
a dog and a cat on a green grass patch.

As the train carries on to a rickety bridge,
liquid metal brews under the infrastructure,
chain link fences, around a barge-sized cylinder,
the letters BIOCLINICA—

Ships in a row, houses in a row,
remind me of the conference I left behind—
chilly halls, long walks to mediocre salads.
Panels, booths and tables, a former teacher
who called me from the ambient din.

How is everyone, I asked.
Donna and Dick, Francie and Jill, Ned,
and Betsy? She finally said, I'm sorry,
to tell you—Betsy died last summer.

A golden glaze spreads over heartland plains.
Seascapes bristle. The trees, beginning to silver—
aspen or birch. In this new sun, concrete towers
look to me like Grecian castles, yet I've never been

to Greece. I've never painted bridges.
I've never read Shakespeare. Now, it's sunshine,
ten days into March. There's no one to talk to about Betsy,

her smile that sprung like a lamp light
going on, her chapbook on my bedside table,
New Haven. A baseball diamond. Aging Victorians.
Pity the trees their kudzu traps. At Westport

the woman beside me eats Ritz crackers
from a papery tube. Outside, a pink graffiti A & P.
Rowers in skulls, neon jackets flapping
like kites over the blue water. Near home—

I think of our warm salon—
my white library, radiator chimes, my husband,
honey, have you watered my blossoms?
Rock walls. A digger's claw. Soggy yards—

THE AWAKENING

Because I couldn't breathe, because I
felt nothing, because my mother thought
something was wrong with me at birth
I kept getting out of bed, scraping my tongue,
brushing the same teeth I'd known since eight years old.
There was the opaque toothpaste.
There was the trickle of hot water.
There was death burgeoning from the mirror.
So I conjured a nurse, from the waist up,
put on a neat blouse and walked down the hall,
gripping the rail, descending the stairs, directing myself:
clean the cat's daily puddle. Bag the withered
rodent by the grill. Drink twenty-eight
ounces of warmed water, sip six ounces
of strong coffee. Record the reigning
weather on linen paper. Stretch the spine
over the floor. Hold the face of the white dog,
gaze in his godlike eyes— check the mirror.

For twenty-five years
there were new mornings, new lists to write,
little clothes to buy, shoes to tie,
homework, breathing classes. Too many voices
for one small mind. Then one day, after hearing
the last child's morning clatter, the back door
slammed shut, I swallowed my life in bed.
Then every drop of blood began to itch
Under the quilt like a mammal stirring, sensing
a primal approval. The sun cast its warm avenue
on the floor. I slithered in the bird sheets,
before slinking down to the glistening rug, then
crawled on my knees over the threshold, thudded
my palms like savants down the long hall,
to the white marble tiles, and clambered up
the sink cabinet like a freed hostage.
And the nasty toothpaste, the lame stream
from the faucet, the mirror for a wild second,
laughed out loud.

POINT OF DEPARTURE

In the milk aisle, she fluttered her eyes down
as if speaking for the whole town
“I heard you’re moving...”
She reminded me of an ostrich
she was so tall and strong and a little place
in my neck began to throb with thoughts
like, *couldn't you have hidden in the cottage cheese
as I picked my husband's yoghurt?*
The bleed began
where her teeth had torn my décolletage
and didn't stop oozing at the checkout line or in the car
though I put on NPR and reminded myself
ferverently at every bloody red light
you're leaving, little one.