

Brick House at Night

A Collection of Poems

April 4, 2022

The Thing That Forgets

Pleasure recalls

the thing that forgets where it's going

forgets the print standing in

for pain. It shuts the fridge door.

It sits on the linoleum floor, thinks about

the glass of water made possible

by the tap just four score

and seven feet away.

It thinks until

it thinks it feels

the cool water coursing

down its throat.

Already

it feels lighter.

This Is How I Draw

I crawl in bed next to my sleeping
daughter at night I feel terrific
pain for those times I let myself dark
and vulnerable into these passes
the beauty of her baffles me my eyes
sting my mouth waters with history
and gratitude

seeping in me an insatiable
shadow I feel moved I feel in love
she is perfect so soft so brown
I don't want to taint her with my stories
yet I lie watching her chest inflate
and collapse listen to her rhythmic
sigh regret

the searching I had been the long
eclipsed walk courses from throat to
roof of dry mouth I try to hold her
scoot close without waking her kiss
her small cool cheek she kicks off
the covers I wanted her safe I wanted
her to be

not me a televised baby maybe
a baby comforted and calm I pull
the blankets back up midchest knowing
she might wake to kick them off again
hoping she will wake hoping she'll reach
through my awful ribs pull the bright
lights out:

out the shock the false delight the violence
the beauty
wanting blue as ever I tug the covers
higher
her head lolls over the side of the pillow
she breathes

I can't bear the weight of her the sight
of her too much, crushing the breath out of me
I trace her charcoal on paper soot
on my fingers she is my solace
she is my gift, the past hiding dark behind her.
I sketch out my adoration like sugar
in a black bowl
to the fore

Brick House at Night

Me, the night, the house—

The big brick of it

The tall gathering of arms

Of it. Me, the night

So vast, so free—

I don't want any part of it

This is not my house

This is not my house

This is not my house

This is not my house

This is not my house

This is not my house

The night, the house, my husband

The hatred

For my genocidal history

My indisputable genealogy

The house, the canal—

Is it still

When I'm not here?

Water for untold arms

For flowing on

This is not my house

This is not my house

Cannot be my house

This is not my house

It cannot be

It must not be

This is not my house

This is your house

Or flowing in, or rather

Disappearing. Me, the night

The oak trees

Holding me close to the house

The canal, dividing

The in-laws, dividing

This person from the road

Dividing this person from

This person from

Whose house is this?

What landlord

Looms over and under?

Where am I?

Whose water is this?

Whose wife am I?

Whose road?

Whose house?

Who is he?

Look! Dead—on a road
That ought to kill the likes of me
The tree, the dog—
That brick of house
Brick of night

The indisputable
Reminder of the many
Likes of me

Is that your dog?

This is

This is not

It will not be blown down

It's all coming down

The family doesn't want me here

He takes my hand, white in brown

This is where we live

At a Distance

Sometimes
I feel like I'm standing
at the edge of the world
waving to you.
Sometimes your
Thin rough hands
look like shovels
or blankets.

Did I tell you
about the night?
Oh, it's dark.
And the stars!
Fallen in the attic
of some other
creature's
home.

I thought I could
never forgive you
your opiates, your violence—
your many disappearing acts.
We got the call late one night.
And there you were, trapped
in a bed of tubes and wires,
trying to breathe, to deny
your body the right
to fail, at last.

Four frosty mornings I rose
alone at dawn, lit a cigarette
for you. Let's smoke on that matter,
you'd joke. I turned in kind by some
long-estranged compass, then to
the earth and up to a washed-out
funeral-bound sky. Your jokes
hadn't changed a wince.
A kind of peace settled in,
rooting faster each day.
while the heavy globe,
dense with daughters,
swiveled and beat
and sang a far-away
mourning song.

I left my cut hair on your pillow.
They carried your casket out.
A piece of us, the four of us,
went with you, and the peace
of you stayed behind.