

Your Mother Always Reaches You

by unusual methods.
She sends a green canoe.

The night before, a yellow ribbon the length
of a donkey's tail. Before that a nimbus cloud

containing rain. It's always something.
She's talking, talking.

You were a wanted child, she
says, what gave you any other idea?

Open the shades, she says, work to be done!
You're not sure? she says, Make it up.

Once, a single red mitten.
Once, a potato with sprouting eyes.

You're such a beautiful girl, she
says, when you stand up straight.

A sprig of lavender in a glass jar.
An open notebook.

Yet We Kept Taking Notes Herein

Worn spine, bound leather, ivory vellum marked,
marked. Accounts ancestral, terrestrial, fiscal.
Of tempests oceanic, volcanic, somatic.
Questions of meaning and time. Architectural
renderings, thought balloons, directions
to a secret meeting. Revelations tipsy,
moribund, floral, arcane. From darlings
of the midnight oil.
I loved you now beside a running brook;
now behind a locked door.
I lost you now among leaping gazelles;
now in the market parking lot.
Frost on the pumpkin (or its equivalent).
And again my darling _____ has bit me on the hand.
What matters matters, matters not.
Stay! Go! Look, look! Ah, well.
Smoldering; frozen; viscous; clear.
Today's weather
reports for duty late and past repair.
Not even the birds are for the birds.
Rumor has it we went to sea in a sieve.
Recipes hastily encrypted, partial, untried.
We shall be the first.
Cloves, rose petals, and something else...
Guess a zest of lemon. Or a restful guest room.
Nothing less or more than a firmament forming.

Channel

Moving with the current
between grassy banks

the raft carrying my old mother
seemed to slow as it passed me.

She held a swaddled baby,
and raised her up so I could look.

My sister's face the startling blue
of a goddess in a Persian miniature.

Of course! She'd come and gone
before we were born, of course

she was blue! Weren't we all?
Wouldn't we always be?

Hadn't this blue leapt
from the sky to be our skin?

After You Were Born

I opened an orange. Citrus the scent
of ascension. Skin readily peeled back

to fruit eaten in the dark.
Why can't we stay

ahead of all parting?
How can we cut and tie off
the cord as if, oh untethered volatile

oil, ruined single syllable,
severed thus we can live.

Partial Compendium of Strange Words

Strange is strange.

Strange and strangled too, and tangerine,
generator, alligator, malleable,
formula, animalcule, pedicure.

Anything pedi- or ante- or proto- or neo-.

Anything -cilious or -ilium or -acacea.

Anything factotum, humdrum, nearly
home or early done, anything whirly-
gig or pearly gates or similarly.