

Dean Street

In this city, you learn to live
with exactly as much love as people have
to offer.

It is all a shedding of weight, a bailing
of water. Sit lightly on the man's bed
you have been sitting on for years.

It still pleases you that among the stains,
your blood is the only mark
visible across the room.

You used to insist he change
the sheets, when you knew
there had been others.

And there were always others.
Finally, it matters not at all.
You sleep in a shirt, and let him hold you.

It feels good,
his chin on your shoulder.
The objects you memorized

(walrus tusk; Jesus nightlight)
as if that would anchor him
are disappearing one by one.

And the green curtain is no longer a sea
changing with the light,
but just fabric, as light as your tee-shirt
and whatever's underneath.

Zweieiiger Zwilling

At first: no one can tell the twins apart, eyes dark as the coffee
their mother drinks, so strong it doesn't need a cup.
Neighbors saw her on the plastic lawn chair,
a thermos over billowing belly,
and they say that's why Zane's fingers twitch
and why Zada's hair flies from a comb.

Children: they belly down under kitchen chairs and blanket
dome, nubbly light an embryonic blue. Trade clothes
and tie their laughter into bows. "*Ich bin Sie.*" His fingers seize.
She laughs, rolls, pins him to the ground. "Or you are me."
Milkskin, soapskin, her skin: their skin. "*Zweieiiger,*" Zada growls.
Zane's whisper slithers. "*Zwilling.*"

Verschwinden moon: they miss the milky light. Zane toes to Zada's room.
Zweieiiger. Zwilling. Curves and hollows. They remember
they have always fit like this, and under domed sheets
shudder home. All Zada's life, her bottom lip has stayed a faint bruised
blue. It's said they grappled—twining,
even in the womb.

July 4th

As a child I didn't watch the sky. I kept my eyes down,
on black tablets scattered on cement. Breath held tightly
as the match, I watched the snakes uncurl in yellow smoke.

Down the street a ginkgo shuddered itself bare,
leaves scattering like sparks.
My fingers trembled before another ashy life.

I found you between unwashed sheets. My body
lengthened, ligaments uncurled.
That year we missed the show.

After, we drank white wine from unmatched mugs.
You poured some on my still-raw flesh; I screamed.
You thought many things were romantic.

Now I can't remember independence. Fires in Arlee
plume the land in smoke. You say this is a day
that we should spend together, though I am leaving you.

I drive past Hungry Horse, families in broken lawn chairs,
bottle rockets by the road. A boy crushes a beer can, kicks it
on a sailing chase. The sky a purple alchemy of fumes.

Inside your house, we are mostly silent. Words are sooty shells,
empty or live. My hand is on the knob. But the door opens
to the sound of bombs. I slam it shut.

We are alone, with only a thin wall against the night.
Left only with the space between us.
Watch it grow.

My mother, swimming sideways

She turns the bath on because
these are the thing you do.
She can't remember why.

The water rises.

A week's worth of pills
scatter like confetti on the floor.
One fish, two fish.

In the other room, the water rises.

Her thoughts are jumping
beetles. She's caught them on Post-its
that ruffle the walls. Script runs sideways,
hops from leaf to yellow leaf.

The water rushes under doors.

I could catch her flying hands,
swim with her through these rooms.
But my hands are busy fumbling
warped drawers, saving paper dolls,
picture books: *Are You My Mother?*