



## Daughter Atom

Grief, we think, a delicacy: origami  
the many folds across memory, shame,  
love lost. Make it a crane—anything  
solitary, endangered, tall at the edge  
of a roaring current. Fold a thousand  
and maybe she'll come back, maybe  
you'll forget, maybe fragility could silence  
the throb in your throat, no way  
to speak it.

It's like this: when protons are taken  
from their nucleus a daughter atom is born,  
spiraling away with enough force that the original  
recoils. A rifle bucked back after firing. I am

daughter atom, once a fleck  
in the ovary that—radiated, bombed—is killing  
my mother. Think of my tiny body fattening  
inside her: embryo, fetus, repellent.  
How could I have saved her, protected?  
Or should she have protected me, knowing  
fragility, how easy paper wings crease and tear?

Nuclear fission: energy lost in separation,  
then energy supposed to be spent protecting;  
the men—brother, father—drunk  
on gin and anger, war and rage downstairs.

From across the country I folded one thousand  
paper cranes. They cover my mother's bedroom  
like bodies after the bomb--dead, anonymous.  
Here is my anonymous grief, Mother, here  
are my creases, arrived at your doorstep  
like drones.

## Youth

Another regrettable thing about beginnings  
is the smell of wild onion curved into being,  
bulb to green, another stench both acrid  
and sweet. There go the college girls  
in their summer gauze, dresses  
that plead the wind to blow through them, girls  
who plead the wind to usher rain, for no one  
desires freedom that persists from morning  
to nightfall, burning the carefully paled skin.

There was once a woman who gathered every  
wild leek from a valley—brought them home  
for boiling. The story goes she cried to death,  
collapsed there on her kitchen floor,  
splayed like a dead animal, road-kill—  
those young things in spring pawing across pavement.  
Many mornings passed before they found her, covered  
her in plastic. It was a terrible smell. They opened  
every window. In her sills, daffodil stems.  
Soon, flowers.

There go the college girls, shedding gauze,  
shoulders and cheeks blushing, burning.  
How easy they cry these nights by moonlight,  
the sun having branded them hers—  
her young, pale things.

**How the stars trembled above us**

our slick blue bodies—  
curving, chaotic—  
minnows in the palm of God's hand,  
the tin moon reeling up the sky  
like a gear.

Was it a wave uncurling? Or your wet lips  
unsealing?

Oh, return to this dusty road  
—my home. My heart  
is water.

## Grief

Some mornings I wake and a century  
has passed. Some mornings I wake  
younger than before. If you stay up 'til dawn  
the moon sings a hymn backwards  
for all histories, waiting, like the Big Bang,  
to collapse. Each dream is a pill  
with someone else's anxiety  
inside. It is sometimes too much to take—  
the gut stuffed with grief in languages you can't  
comprehend. I wake with the weight  
of death, death, death; a sun's beam  
across bedding does not mean *hello*,  
*begin, commence the chorus of duty*.  
Instead, questions: *Where*  
*are your shovels. Where is the earth*  
*you will split and plant this litany*  
*of bodies*. Don't cry—  
tragedy arrives in the dull  
haul of afternoon. Best to stay in bed,  
grow young, bury the bodies  
one by one in the pockets  
of time's morning jacket. Still I worry  
about the world outside. Some mornings  
branches finger the window pane.  
What if they break. What if the branches  
break