

**Kentucky Rest Stop**

Cat was like no way we're doing this leash thing,  
woman.

Woman,  
don't tell me you didn't see this coming.  
You set your honey down

in the pets-allowed grass near our hot cars.  
Here your beast shrank inside the straps  
until it was an arrow and shot itself

into the world beyond. That is,  
towards the river.

And you,  
don't tell me that woman should not  
have brought her cat in her car. Or that that cat

is coming back. Don't tell me cats  
don't like cars. I'm not talking about cats.

Don't tell me you've never been that woman.  
Never stood there holding a leash of nothing.

She'd packed the tuna treats.  
Kitted out the backseat.

Cat,  
you didn't stay  
with the one who loved you.

Now you've got the river. And the river doesn't care.

**Motorcycle New**

Hello left turn not  
into you, fire hydrant of the present, that I won't check with eyes, only  
a cheek. I'm riding at the future: of Oakland Avenue's two cars  
salty in puddles of shattered glass, now presence, now back-  
of-the-head past. The future of my alley: craters.  
The future of craters: gravel. The end of this alley:  
other alleys – the dumpster, a parking lot,  
a silver maple leaning wrong,  
a pokeweed slobbering berries,  
a honeysuckle bullying a pine.

**Preschool**

*a golden shovel, for Marge Piercy*

Dezarai is freshly five. I am kneed up at the  
bitty table next to her. I want her to be a pitcher  
that pours for me a glass of herself. There are cries  
from the blocks corner. I ask, "What are you glad for?"

Dezarai's gaze is stone. O turn her to water,  
a river full and traveling. Dezarai's hand moves to  
the crayon box. She almost chooses blue. I carry  
the wait. She finds the top of the page and  
writes every letter she knows. T, H, R, and capital I (a  
stick with four wings). Then the little i, like a person  
without arms. "What do you love?" I pull for  
any of her nouns. Her letters lace the paper. Work  
begins now on the back. "Look at that!"  
she delights. "That is my name. That is  
my first and last names for real."

**Everybody Pees**

Into slick white bowls in brittle rooms.  
Into soft cloth, when we are babies.  
In pools, you know it.  
I pretend to check the tires of the car.  
Today while I was sitting by my window,  
a man peed on the side of Jerry's house.

He slow-drove an Olds, flung open the long door,  
bloomed out the thump of house party,  
and unfolded himself, a skinny-jeaned  
ball-capped iguana. And the door stayed flung  
like an arm you'd hold out for a loved one to swoon into.  
He saddled up Jerry's little incline  
faced the fake brick shingles  
undid his frontside  
and peed.

He was stoned. He was drunk. He'd been drinking coffee.  
His baby was in the back. On fire with grief. On his way to an interview.  
Just had a fight with his sister about their mother he'd come up from Cincinnati to see.  
He always does this, it's his thing. He and Jerry, they go way back.  
Jerry fucked him over.  
Now he can leave.

**The Dry Dock Cranes of Brooklyn Navy Yard**

Mesmerized  
by the muscle of the dark green water

three stout-bodied cranes night-wandered  
to the edge of the East River.

Yet when the sun rose and the sky opened  
they understood themselves as obvious —

three high hulks on skinny-long legs  
unhiding in all that air. They froze —

let the paint peel in curls  
off their sides.

I don't know how long they held it, their breaths  
or what made them give up pretending

they weren't rough beasts  
among us. There they go —

slow-swinging their snouts and chains.  
I ache to own the sky like that.