

The First Winter

Some mornings I have to remind myself that it will all grow back, no matter how unlikely that seems. The grass is browning under a layer of alternating melting and icing snow.

My mother calls me to ask if I'm surviving the winter. She wants to hear both answers. Yes, and no, I've always been your southern child, can we turn up the heat? Instead, R. adds another log.

And of course, yes. As a mother does. Hopes for unimagined successes. Hopes for family. Even when it isn't snowing, the air sometimes ices through and the wind turns solid,

white. The slick surfaces. It's always a hard winter, the first one. The doctors said the PAO would give me another ten to fifteen years on my feet. At 19 and 21, those odds

were favorable. I wasn't entirely sure that I would therefore need another. She wants to know if the winter is sitting inside my hips. Yes, and no. I can feel

the temperature sink, the frost in the blood. As if by clockwork, the years have passed and I'm struggling to lift. To rise. To walk those miles. Sometimes,

the valley swallows up all the warmth and the surrounding Seven Sisters get capped in clarity. A little warmer there at the glorious freezing top. Before I know

it, everything will be green. Despite me, or with no regard to how I fair, winter will cease.

Alaska Sonnets

1.

Three woman reasons to pack up & leave:
instead of sun death rose in the morning,
or love swaggered in, or else left. It left.
In Alaska, summer days become nights
become day again. A turning into.
The North Lands become Texas & become

barren, or else blossomed. A turning
away from. Oaken doors, fluid. Glaciers,
permanent. One moment, I was a string
of white pearls kept in his pocket, solid,
precious, possessed. I was made of the land
I lived in. Then, just a body. Woman
was denser, denser & ice-mountain blue.

2.

When the sun sets in Alaska, it does
not dip under the treeline, but hovers
there purpled. Near to, night shuffles but can't
arrive. Still, tonight I can see it - that
satellite. On the news, they are calling
it Super Moon. Closer, oranged.

It's been a month, Sean. (Oh-) Alaska
is majestic. An Orca and her child
finned past the boat today. How's your daughter?
Does she think I'll come home? Ocean wakes
against the deck. I am a collector.
Salt, mostly. Scrape it off the rails, my cheeks.

Yours, your girl's. Brine off the teeth, whales.
I'll start hoarding moons. Purple, too.

Remembering The Day Before My Marriage

Most people are disappointing.
Around me, the ones I have loved fail
to rise and become. Great brains pickled
in jars, to be placed on a shelf.

As if to be used later.
Saved for good company. Silver locked up
in glass cabinets. My mother,

she used to only use the good silver
for the holidays, but she liked
the way it felt on her teeth
better, and one morning
she put it all in the regular drawers.

The silver gets tarnished, a little ugly,
but it still feels better on the teeth.
The good stuff becomes daily wear.

I think for a while there,
I was hoping all the good stuff was to come.

R. was dancing in kitchen / bedroom
in Little Pink House by the river,
as he made us one last late night snack
before we slept unwed
for the last time.

We took it all off the shelves.
The good stuff.
The daily wear.

Oh, Woman--

when the saint is a man, when
the saint comes sharp jaw, comes feral and fur,
comes slow motion, takes years to get there, takes
the long way about it, even now, barely
is big hands and bite teeth, when the saint is
a wolf, prey-sure and dawn chasing, prey-sure

and waiting, when the man is canine, when
the beast is body, the body rising
under and into, if you can become
devotion, become devoured, become
a question that lives in the god mouth, be
meat and whine and moan, if you can live here,

in this pause and chase, if you can bear this, that
love is not yours alone, then love you must.

Fire in Paradise

The first time I saw Texas on fire, dazed
and complicit in the driver's seat, her

clouds rising out over the back of hill
country rising, I thought for a moment,

with such relief: rain.

A break from the sun

and never setting. Maybe by tonight,
I thought with such relief, we'll sleep. But fire

was eating whatever wind it may. I
used to think living forever young was

the endgame. Under sun, the years swift pass
unnoticed. Fake plastic trees live longest.

No one will tell you when you're growing sick,
Elizabeth. They'll say thin. Have you seen

how the summer brays and flaunts? Vogues and screams.