

These days my dog sleeps soundly

no teeth

Gerbera

When last I saw you I was kicking a pebble down the street
and you were picking almond skins out of your teeth
sun was fresh and
gerbera daisies lined the sidewalk,
yawning

I wasn't thinking about you then
not like I do now

When I picture your house
there's a constant trail of ants through the kitchen
and cinnamon snails ooze steam out the window

When last I wrote you it was a postcard from the corner store with
gerbera daisies
stretched and smiling

I grow a new leaf every time I remember to think about you
and they fall off when I forget

You never wrote me back

When last I missed you I was walking down the street with
a little bird tucked under my hat
whistling
I cried for you, and then for me
and gerbera daisies lined the sidewalk
doubled over laughing

The first miracle

after Chris Abani

The first miracle was the bear
washed onto the shore with the tide
salt-crusted and eyeless
clothed in kelp and bladderwrack
the sun was coming up at 3 in the morning
and there she was
at my feet in the shallow water
still, then swaying
as if she'd sought me out herself

The second miracle was the fire
a great boom like the inside of a steel drum
stack of flames taller than God himself
and black oil-smoke filling the valley like a
capful of ink in a glass of cool,
clear water
the whole town gathered on the shore
to watch the world end
together

The third miracle was the shipwreck
too late by the time I even heard
drifting furnace, man overboard
bobbing pink face among the
pink shrimp pot buoys
crumbling hull sinking in silent goodbye
and the collective sigh
of relief

The scab falls off

Black dog lifts her nose flush with the sky
and it twitches thoughtfully
eyes widen and
ears swivel

vigilance is a practiced state

9 crows fit for a funeral cock their heads and confer
black blood crusts at the nape of my neck
if I miss it so much then why did I leave?

Crisp ginger breaks
the heat of the day

I remember nights when the sun truly hid
too dark to rest
such a waste but I'm smiling when I say it

Regret tastes like anis-seed
and I don't miss it

These days my dog sleeps soundly on my chest
her breath tickles my cheek and
her nose twitches restfully

the crows call
the scab flakes off

fruition is a practiced state

Settle

Scorpions travel two-by-two
it's the only thing I remember

Screws run in pairs up the
seams of a wall and the dust settles
heavy

If I had to name this feeling I'd say it's:

spit dribbling off a dog's tongue
hot wax dripping down the side of a windowsill
syrup drizzling off a spoon
I get stuck like a fly all the time

The river washes over the rock
and the rock pretends not to care
shame settles heavy

Sitting in a box with God and it smells like rotting

I'm stuck again -
tiptoeing around my eggshell house
my eggshell room
driving us home in my eggshell car
as if it were religion

But honey drizzles off the spoon
and the scorpions break off;

this time next year the wall will split open at the seam
the dust will kick up
and settle
light

Raven(ous)

Feathers from a full unkindness
oil slick littering the sidewalk

I hope this letter finds you well
finds you warm
finds you buttoned up in your coat in a
shaft of morning light on a
cold park bench

do you still feed the birds?

silhouettes on the snow eating berries
seeds
tearing open pouches of potato chips

ravenous and
on occasion
unkind