

### **Ghazal for My Daughter**

Each time we speak, my daughter  
and I, atoms explode in my daughter.

There seems to be nothing I can do  
nothing to say, nothing to save my daughter.

If I gave her the trees, she'd want the sky,  
so great is the hunger of my daughter.

Words are waves eroding rock  
over time, everything breaks my daughter.

Somehow, it's always my fault, still  
my fault for not living only for my daughter.

The sun shines steady every day  
but the moon waxes and wanes in my daughter.

Too strong, she says, too harsh, this sun, this  
mother which warms then burns my daughter.

### **Falling from the Sky**

They hiss as they're torn from the night  
like skin from a thumb,  
close to the cuticle, close enough  
it bleeds. You stick your thumb  
in your mouth, suck  
the dim memory of childhood  
from falling stars, the brilliance  
of their birth, the silence of their deaths.

Look at the dazzle, this sparkling  
canopy, an eloquent mystery,  
the movement of the galaxy  
a constant, the zodiac fixed  
like an old friend, a symbol  
of times gone by, where once you knew  
what you were just by looking  
at the night sky or reading charts,  
as if it could ever have been  
that simple.

Lines from a fortune cookie:  
You will meet a tall, dark stranger.  
Look into your cup: tea leaves are curling.

### **In This House**

Words bubble  
to the top like burnt sugar,  
a hard, brittle shell.  
Everyone walks on egg toes  
or leaps over blazing red coals  
head first into where they don't want to go.  
A sigh is a poisoned dart  
aimed straight for the heart,  
a full-on pout nothing less  
than nuclear fall-out.  
People come and go  
guilt pasted on their faces  
like smiley stickers,  
hugging themselves  
because no one else will.  
Blood sweats from the walls,  
into the teacups, into the stew;  
into everyone's portion  
wrings the last drop.

### **Being the Man**

Wolves aren't what you expect they are.  
They're more: always on the lookout  
for the one who's smarter, faster—  
not meaner, not sly, not the one in sheep's clothing.  
They've gotten a bad rap with tales of pigs  
and little girls—sharp canines dripping blood,  
heads back, howling in fury, when really  
they're only calling like a mother whose child  
is dawdling down the block, or for the one  
who's taken a wrong turn and is lost.

A real wolf wouldn't bitch slap some woman,  
or stray from the pack, wouldn't steal  
what didn't belong or eat what wasn't earned.  
A real wolf wouldn't wait to be told  
who needed protection or what chores  
needed doing. Real wolves remember  
where they came from, who they are,  
and who they've been. A real wolf  
doesn't look anything like you.

**The Not So Distant Future**

--for Elizabeth Kolbert, *The Sixth Extinction*

Imagine a sky with no stars,  
a shroud of clouds,  
atmosphere so choked  
you think you're drowning  
every time you breathe.

Search for the moon  
in vain, search for light—  
there is none.

What is it Coleridge said?  
Water water everywhere  
and ne'er a drop to drink.

Not even fish survive,  
nor crabs nor coral,  
the earth returning  
to the noxious soup  
it once was, so long ago.

We stand on the brink  
of our own re-creation.  
Who will remember?  
Only the code recorded  
in thin strands, coiled to strike.