

## PENDING STORM

I'm an old woman now  
stubborn as the rocks  
that litter this farm.  
They all want me gone—  
my kids and my kids' kids—  
thrown out like spoiled food  
to spend my last days in  
a nursing home.  
Nothing *home*  
about it, just a way-station  
of hell  
units of flesh stored  
in tight rooms  
cash-cows barred  
from the natural world.

Bellows come up from  
the handful of cows, there  
in the south pasture—  
the remnants of my herd, tails  
tucked in, sensing  
sparks in the air I  
can't even imagine.  
Nature is smart—  
she must have her reasons  
for giving my cows  
a bigger bag of tricks than  
us humans.

Lone streak of lightning  
sparks across the sky.  
My cows turn skittish  
start prancing  
know they need  
a roof between them  
and the heavens.  
They're hungry too  
know that hay  
easy for the taking  
is waiting inside.  
We all know there's little  
to scavenge from the fields—  
too many days nights  
days and nights  
Nature holding on to her  
miracle of water.

She must have her reasons  
for being so stingy—  
but damn if it hasn't  
turned up the jabber  
over me  
    leaving this farm.

I'm kept outside  
by the charge in the air.  
Perched on my porch  
I feel it, like my cows—  
    where the hairs  
    sprout from my scalp.  
Makes sense, I say—  
since just below there  
neurons dance  
    nonstop  
kicking up an electrical storm.  
They say by my age the brain's shrunk.  
If true, does the gray matter that's left  
Host denser, fiercer storms  
    or fewer of them?  
The former, I say.  
'Cause my hands may be claws  
and my knees may be stiff  
    but my brain's still  
    densely fiercely fired.

Two webs of lightning  
    one east, one west  
    fire up, ready to duel.  
*Duel, I shout, but make your finale  
    be rain, be rain, be rain.*  
Rain's at the heart of everything  
and for months there's been not a drop.  
Drought's my kids' and my kids' kids' ace  
    in the hole.  
The whole lot of them  
    salivating  
    to cart me off  
    to split apart  
    this holy land.  
Then flimsy tacky houses  
will sprout instead of corn  
while to the bank my  
    family steals.  
Over my dead body, I say—  
which is just how the cards

will be laid.  
I won't end up buried  
on that rise facing west  
my head facing east  
like the Caddo lay  
here on this holy land long  
before me,  
and blessed by Nature  
with a bigger  
bag of tricks than  
    us white folks.  
The resting place I'd planned  
will be a parking place.  
But storms will still  
    pass over  
and lightning will still  
    pierce the sky—  
not caring a whit if  
it's scabby streets  
or scabby crops that  
    coat the ground below.

"Too bad we can't program the weather,"  
first grandson, now grown up, declared—  
head stuffed full of facts as dry as the ground.  
"Will happen soon enough," said his brother.  
They were standing right here  
perched on my porch  
eyeing my burnt fields  
    my miserable cows.  
I'd hoped they'd been thinking  
back to playing in cornfields  
whooping at arrowheads  
    and wishing time  
    didn't flow  
    so fast.  
Me? I'd've rather reached eighty  
At half the pace I did since  
    we get to ride  
    the river  
    only once.

Now bolt after bolt  
    penetrates the sky but  
it still has no moisture  
to respond. Thus  
it was with Sloane and me  
    before he gave up and fled.

Wetness breeds life.  
Yes, wetness breeds life  
    but my husk still  
    clings  
    to this place.

Big thunder now closer.  
Somewhere it's raining.  
Just not on this farm  
I'm joined to at the hip—  
which I've got to get  
working so I can herd  
    my cows to the barn.  
*You keep being random*, I shout  
at the thunder and lightning  
*and don't ever let yourselves be tamed.*  
Then, of the universe  
I ask humbly, in my own way  
to thwart us humans  
    whenever she sees fit.

They're coming on Sunday—  
    my kids and my kids' kids—  
for dinner, or so they say.  
The rumbling's gotten louder  
not of thunder  
but theirs, to pry me  
    loose from this farm.  
While I herd in my cows  
if I could only connect  
with one of those bolts  
then everyone would  
end up content—  
but me most of all  
dying face-up  
    mouth open  
    to catch  
    the falling  
    rain.

## WORDS: CYCLE

A girl of three—it's me, in fact—  
on her first beach stands still,  
mouth agape at the size of the sea,  
agape at its color: She sleeps when  
the sky is that same shade of blue  
just before night pulls it down.  
But the *sound* of the sea ... that's  
a different story, one she knows  
by heart, and she tilts her head left  
to remember, but no words will come.  
Now is too far from when, long  
before words, she loved this same  
sound, in that first world, so dark  
and moist—the slow, patterned whoosh  
of breathing. The pulse of her first  
house, her mother. Now, and here,  
the slow, patterned whoosh is  
of waves, curling then covering  
her feet. For a time she's a  
pilgrim come home.

☪ ☪ ☪

My true love says I'm a fool for words,  
fully unbalanced, my head tilted left  
from their weight, that sex is my antidote,  
sex my escape from the whirlpools of words  
forever at swirl in my head. *But sex  
can't be forever*, he says. In words' stead  
he prescribes a large dose of images,  
turns off the light. *Time to dream*.

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It's in my cards: A whoosh of wind  
turns a page of Fate's book. On  
the following, Death is there waiting.  
Will I, like a fool, keep reading the words?  
Or will I look up to mind each detail  
of my pilgrimage back to the place  
well past my wordless first sea,  
past my wordless first home,  
fading to black, fading to black  
till I reach the nothing I came from?