

I am looking

Beneath my hair I dreamt
were gaping craters,
tunnels like
orchid columns, leading
to a sepal fear

Darling, I am looking
but the junipers will close me
up if I start asking around.
Do you want me
swallowed whole,

sucked and papered away
into sailing ashes and window
frost, or was this always
the plan? Maybe courage
is like falling asleep,

nodding into a
booming neck crook,
a hapless coring
I am looking
for the other end

of my shoelace, for a gleam
which to call holy, for knowledge
of pine and sugared
heights to call
my own.

Passing

For Magda, who arrived in Sweden in 1945.

To bear cruelty, dense
and probing, is to wear a persistent
splinter, needled by way of
glove or pocket fabric, but

Magda carried hers like Atlas
sewn into the lining of a bag
she stitched from bedsheets, placed
there by many heavy hands

that stroked her hair before slipping
this parting gift between the
seams. And over the years
the bag grew so heavy it bowed her

like a lodgepole sapling in the wind
until her forehead nearly touched
the ground, supplicating to the earth
before cruelty. And when she

had a daughter, Magda stroked her
hair often in the evenings, never
noticing the gradual accumulation of
sorrow behind her ears. It would

disguise itself in the shape of
shining things, amulets that
grew and drew light toward her
collar and other seams. In this way,

the only weight placed there
was her own, settling unexamined,
but watchful and insistent
of unguarded fingernails.

Space Legs

neither
root
is
obscuring
reality

with seductive
ambiguous
zip
ever-shifting the
markers

of
the veil. It will
lie helpless
stealing
out to

blink off
to burn with
unendurable
expense
while

six point
four billion
eyes exclaim
indignant
loss

Cutlery

Quiet mornings appear the
cutting need in negative, in lack of

light and space, and slips between
waking ears to trail

north of 43rd street, wandering
dense stands of spruce

five hundred miles past
the body that

stooped over mine to
warm biting extremities, and

today, five dusking
nails behind the wheel of a

blue pickup to the brooding
roads of Piscataquis county

declared the word
to be cleaved by lip

and hook knife,
to shape spoons from

tongue tall tales, small
utensils meant

for tables where
they may better serve

polite piecemeal than feed the
belly laugh that once wandered

across my kitchen, sleep heavy and
scar proud except of one

that I wonder about still.

Elegy

Did they feel alone
enough? Sixteen, the number
of days it took
to howl the hive back
tearing honeybees
to roost

on your features, silent
immovable, scalloped
flesh bearing a metallic taste,
perhaps they were coins all along
barter for cheap fortunes,

hymns to the waning moon.
It didn't take long. The
planets foretold it and
toast the salt flows accordingly.

Better to throw out the
bathwater with the tea bags
and soliloquies, after
thorough steeping there is
no revival.

Softly, softly came the
reply from across the way
strangling phalanges
by telephone chord
trying to keep still

Mercury, where are you? This
scuttling marauder could use some
grit and brimstone between the
teeth and you are nowhere.
Do you wonder about the

foretold? Bow and arrow
are only second names. To glean comfort
from whittled boughs is like seeking honey
in tarpit constellations,
the loaded barrel at attention.

It is unwise to do anything
but take aim. It is unwise
to stand naked on a creaking
dock staring down the pipe. It
is unwise to
announce yourself
to the stars

or the bees