

THIS ISN'T POETRY

There is nothing poetic about rising from the ashes,
nothing lovely about the way we survived.

We did not emerge like a miracle, wet and crying
and new. No one marveled at our lives.

Survival was like the quietness after a storm. It was ominous
and not to be trusted. I would not say that we rejoiced.

I would say we looked at each other with the shock
of being alive, with suspicion, our bodies unsure
of what to do with the "gift."

This second life wandered toward us tentatively
like a stray dog orphaned by the disaster.

To this day, he keeps watch by the window.

MIGRAINE

Someone walks under the archway in the yard across the street, carrying a hedge trimmer. I swear, when he starts it, I take it personally. I peer out from the window and watch as the foliage collapses. I consider his labor representative of me; I am shedding with the hours. My body, over time, has been carved into shapes I don't recognize. They say it's the years that change you, but I find the hours to be worse. An hour swings like an ax. An hour can sever something vital.

I COULD TELL YOU ABOUT THE ILLNESS

but I don't want to write about that.

I want to tell you about a dream I had:

Something was stuck in my leg, it was squirming its way into my skin.

I remembered how to dislodge a tick and went about it the same way, counterclockwise, twisting till I pulled it out. Its head was stuck –

which I knew, even in my dream, was bad –

so I dug and dug, and retrieved the head of a snake.

I crushed it and threw it in the dirt

and for the first time in months I woke up thinking:

Maybe I have the power to kill the things that want me dead

I'M TOO YOUNG TO DIE

and this is my only consolation. There is an unwritten rule that should prevent death from overplaying its hand. I am summoning things that should not be awakened; I am raising the dead every time I get out of bed. Every morning the world gawks at my appearance – every morning it gasps *she's alive*.

PASSAGE

When I'm gone, use my
Bones as oars, hulls, or other
Means to cross water