

Dream Bird

There is much reverence for sleep but, to me, it is like falling off to war.
Each night I slip from the edge and land heavy at the bottom.
My teacher meets me there; she is cloaked in ragged velvet.

My teacher offers me a sword and says, same as all the nights before:
“Hold the weapon like a bird. Your grip cannot be crushing
like a vice, nor gentle like a cradle.” This is just a dream.

Like all dreams it is, to everyone else, a bore. The cast iron meaning
collapses into nothing as soon as light rises and I push through
alarm bells to explain the detail. But it is always like this:

I hold my weapon like instructed and stand naked in a glass house,
so dreamy. Outside, brambles stretch and bow toward the
windowpanes and I look out to a familiar, impossible landscape.

Peering back at me through the pane is a robin. He looks
male to me; robins always do, - puffed chests, askance eyes.
If problematic masculinity could birth itself, it would land as robin: pesky, leering.

In this moment though, I give consent for the nosy robin's looking.
I am giant and beautiful; my body refracted through glass.
The house is quiet. I raise my sword to the knife-edge of violence and grace.

Suddenly, like always, the robin flings itself against the glass. The house wavers, then
shatters. My teeth fall out, I realize I am late to the only place I have ever needed to be.
Predictably, I lose my sword among the disintegrating windows and must retrace my steps.

I follow the shard-path back to my sword and find it is the same path that I
dream-remember describing to my lover, awake, in bed that morning.
I have lived through this before and risen, mythic.

Through everything, robins swarm. They pummel me with their tin-tough beaks
and chirp the same old songs of chorus, refrain, chorus. They never sing a verse.
I arc my weapon. I trill. I am not crushing, I am not gentle. I am a warrior.

I wake up, bloody nose and parchment colored bruises rising on my chest.
I find my shoes, I pour my coffee, I go to work.
So real. So real.

Evaporation

The Goddess

She stands in the kitchen eating figs.
In my irrepressible, unending catalog of her
I know figs seed her body with hives.
And yet - there she is.

Weight on her right foot, carving dried ficus
into shards, dreaming this time is different;
hoping the garish, hibiscus slash will not
consume her neck. And yet - she knows,
and I know, it always does.

And isn't this what love is? The knowing.
The lists we keep that make a person
- if not completely whole -
then gives them form that we
can grasp and understand.

"Don't eat the figs," I cry, desperate and reduced.
I beg for the chance to save her.
She slides a tiny slice into her mouth and nods.

"I won't." she says.

The bloom starts on her neck; bright and fast
it balloons toward her ear like deadly, ripping
volcano ash. She scrapes her skin with pin-straight
fingers and cracks open under the pink.

I claw for the why of this untruth.
"You are eating the figs." I say. "I see you
eating. You lie to me"
She slips another between her barely open
lips and says,

"I would never lie to you."

But she has lied to me. She has said,
"I will never leave you."
One hundred, one thousand,
unending times promised.

Evaporation

She lied.

She is leaving now as
she stands in the kitchen
hairless, translucent.

And I am watching her leave -
evaporate slowly and return to the clouds.

Six full moons from now she will be gone,
completely returned to the star
matter from where we all began.