

Weeding While Contemplating a Break Up

I

Dig deep, get beneath it
or grab at the base and yank.
Tease out the thread
that snakes underground.

II

Mass murder. More than a little guilt
as I pull industrious lives
before they can fully express themselves.
Never to flower nor go to seed
yet propelled like the rest of us
by a desire to thrive.

III

Wrong place, wrong time, I tell them.
If only you had landed in crazy Mary's yard.
She would have let you live, talked with you all night.

IV

Just under an hour to clear the vegetable bed.
I would say I should have done this sooner
but it's easier to grasp what I do not want
after it's been around a while.

V

The ones I always miss
masquerade as the desired.
Same leaves, similar flowers,
but if you look closely
something's amiss.

VI

Damn. Sometimes
I make a big mistake
and get rid of the good.
A cucumber plant tangles
in my rip and yank, or an onion
just coming into onionhood
pulls up with a clump
of grass. I tell myself
it's an accident
but right now
I really don't know.

Studio

Don't worry about death

at least that's what I thought he said
as we reach, and reach, toward the far wall, then hinge
into triangle pose. Glad for permission,
but still can't ignore the ache
the slow burn as I try to balance.
I'm missing two corners
of you-me-us.

Flatten it out, it's more about form than death.

As we stretch our right arms toward two o'clock
I'm not sure what he means
but I tuck in my fifty-year-old belly
sight along my upward arm
try out a position
that I fancy to be the stance
of a time-defiant warrior.

Soften your gaze. He's speaking to me.

And don't worry about the depth of the pose.

Depth, not death, I realize, disappointed.

*Don't worry about depth. So I bend
less deeply, flatten out, arranging myself
into a vertical plane so thin that I don't exist.
I surface many poses later
all of us in downward-facing dog.*

I Don't Need To Know

Not the name of the frog that sounds
like a ratchet, nor why it's calling
in the fall. That huge floriferous fungus
on top of the stump — I don't care to know
if it's safe to eat. It's not in me to ask myself
why I visited this patch of land this summer
hoping for a glimpse of the bright blue bunting
that we always looked for in the cottonwood.
Some of the hummingbirds by the bridge
today might be the same busy birds
that kept brushing our arms that year. I don't know
how long they live, and not knowing is okay with me.

I think I might know why the warblers are drab and silent in fall,
why they hawk for bugs and frantically work the branches.
I could probably explain why the wood ducks seem so brilliant now
after a mottled August. You taught me that, and more.
This morning, a green heron stretched his neck
farther than I ever could have imagined—
but these days, nothing surprises me.

I know exactly why I hold each season close,
as if it were my last visit. I remember
your last season, that fall when we heard
the chitter of the hummingbirds
in the bright orange jewelweed
long before we saw them
hovering to feed.

Aftermath

We root for trees to stand upright
in the same way we want our parents
to live forever, our friends to stay loyal,
our passions to burn bright.
We nurture – or neglect –
that massive presence
and then it crashes.

How quickly we try to fix the tangle,
transform jagged edges
and dangling branches
tame the lightning's gash
the ragged rip of the wind
with smooth swift cuts
easy-to-handle chunks.
We gather branches in tidy bundles
place them where they won't be in our way.

Two years ago, after the tornado's sudden swath,
we wept to see the herons circle and circle
over the mass of trees that once harbored their young.
Can we really know what creatures feel?
Why were we so surprised at how fast
they settled in to feed, how the next year,
they returned to rebuild their lives?

Admire the diligence of the fungus
now awakened on the fallen trunk!
Celebrate its foresight and patience.
Its spores lie in wait
then seize the wet, wild gusts
as a chance to thrive.

Yesterday, the old pine lay across the front yard
sheltering a bat with two pups, furry little bumps
clinging to her breast. We couldn't read her sleepy gaze
but desperately needed to take charge, to heal,
anxious as we waited for wildlife rescue to return our call.

All afternoon, the symphony of chainsaws and chippers
drowned out the *caw caw caw* of the homeless crow.