

## Cleopatra's Summer Party

*I am fire and air; I've had that much to drink.*

All that's left is a tingling in my skin, a breeze.

I can feel music pulsing in my body. I let a man  
write *slave* on my chest. My sister leads me away,  
full of vodka, still protective.

We're scooping vodka and fruit out of a cooler.

Her friends say *cocaine* and shuffle into a bedroom.

This has been her whole summer. At some point  
the cops will be called. But she is alive,  
tiny and vibrant, vine-like— a combed-out tangle, frayed  
fingers and toes, dangerous like a jellyfish  
or an electric wire.

## In My Print of Gustav Klimt's "Death and Life"

A mother presses her baby  
to the north pole of her forehead.

Her golden girl leans over a grandmother  
to kiss the baby's other cheek

and together they form a planet of bodies.

A man curls his equator of shoulders

around a woman, pulls her  
into the slope and earth of his skin.

It's easy for me to believe they're a family—  
lit by orange and rose

in the dark space of indigo and evergreen—  
held together by that crushing pull

families have. They don't see  
the long body rising up beside them,

settling into a waiting orbit

with a knotted club and bony grin—

A body cut with crosses.

They don't hear his alien language

yet, or notice that their wide-eyed,

poppy-lipped girl

is staring at him wildly, swooning off the edge.

## I Took Out the Death

I took out the death and rewrote it

but it's hard to get the timing of the goodbye right.

I couldn't write the part about the blood you dripped into your notebook,

or how you slicked your finger through it to draw yourself,

because it sounded too much like a metaphor.

I took out everything I wrote when I first heard the news;

the pun I tried with *being grave* and *in a grave*.

I took out the jewelry and clothes dressing your floor.

I mentioned a scarf once, but not *the* scarf,

not that goddamn scarf I marveled over.

I took out the moment when your world narrowed

to just this room, to just this closet,

when all you could see was the red light on in the bathroom.

The walls of the bathroom were covered in your Sharpie handwriting,

round, happy misspelled words, almost Comic Sans.

We painted over those.

## Dreamland Kept Getting Larger

She crouched inside a lightning-struck  
tree trunk that first night. I crawled in after her,  
so relieved I couldn't speak.

I lost her in a blue house— the one with blackberry bushes  
in the hallways, and rooms  
full of tiny animals  
in cages.

She only comes back occasionally, and I don't realize  
I have recreated her  
until after I wake up.

One night she climbed the mountain  
then let herself roll down. Sometimes I catch her.  
Sometimes I hold her body, which was always small,  
and try to bring her back, as the sky spreads  
into a glassy thinness, as her brown eyes  
become lighter and lighter.

## Things That Don't Survive

The swan with the long ceramic neck.

The bugs she collects in a jar.

The brittle seashells on the table. Beaded necklaces.

Her collection of dried oak leaves.

Anything white will not last in our house.

Her beanpole body, dressing up,

throwing clothes on the floor.

We put the pears from the tree in a paper bag to ripen

and forgot them. Acres of plastic

Happy Meal toys have disappeared into the carpet

and our feet will not survive them.

She palms the glass angel figurine

she found at the garage sale, says

*I don't know why I like fragile things.*