

in lion arenas alone

today is the day the next volume starts.

I will write a date on the flap of this brown book,
I will take your gifts of guilt
and re-wrap them into kindling
for a fire that can burn itself to black.

today is the day I shelve your pages
and make you a memory that covers in dust.
I will forget your shame, matronly as it is,
the way you move your pieces.
I'm reminded that
there was a man who gave many years
to your Olympic thrusts, the high jumps

ending in broken feet and relays
when you never grabbed the baton.
he is gone. I did not sign up
to wear his number, to take rank in his
place as one to play. I won't stay,

just as I wouldn't in former days
because, to my surprise,
I am stronger and more solitary,
having trained in these lion arenas alone.
I have become my own home, and am comforted.

I know I had you, like a dream.

you're like a dream I know I had
but can't recall
the bird whose song beckons
my mind from clawing the meat
of it, and in distraction's shake,
I become dumb.
but I sense you still,
saying, "I dreamed last night
and it was so interesting,"
and while that last word slips

across the tip of red tongue,
I know interest lives only in
the meat that's gone,

bird-clawed, to some tree.
I look back toward you, your haze,
I know I felt you near in sleep,
we likely talked and touched
some subtle way, and with value.

but the damn bird sang an allure.
she played a pinochio game
upon my mind, a kind of slight of hand.
she's a fast-fawning, quick-cawing
raven, so I can't recall, though
I know I had you, like a dream.

tastes what she's chosen

this fighting dog howl
growling down open necklines
it smells of the last shot
she forced down her throat
when it tiptoed up trachea
tasting of last time, the
bitter ungloried
became her own choke.
there's a ruckus of idiocy
swarming behind her and
all that she hopes
is for someone to find her
but, unknown to screamers
she's fisting a fight upon
green and black dartboards
those warming glass pints.
there is nothing to hold her
and nothing to turn down
the ricocheted madness
those idiots make.
she becomes what she wouldn't
but tastes what she's chosen
because swallowing gives her
some passion control.

who knows, except the poet

there is something light
about it here tonight.
do you feel the airiness?
is that cloud a mist
around your neck?

my head floats above
and separates
from the rest of me,
all solid and bedded.
my head is above you.
do you feel my gaze?
it is here and now, with that,
you see validation.

you want a word
from between legs
to make you feel more.

what does that mean?
you will speculate.
you will ask and answer.

it must be a body,
so easy on the amygdala.
you will say it is a man,
whose penis wants the subject.
because legs
must just mean sex.
but between legs is
life coming forth,
and in those motions
is a heave to death,
blood congealed and covering
like a saran wrap seal.
but maybe it is sex.

who knows, except the poet,

who writes blinded with a fold
because the lack of light
and distraction
make you crazy
to know at this moment
if it's not the between legs that you want,
that word that you want,
that momentum of walking or wanting or working or dying you want.

who knows? the poet knows.

the matchstick girl

the matchstick girl is of no use
in a time like this, when it is
such a transient flame she carries
in those mitten-wrapped hands,
shivering. she shakes upon striking,
and it's not helpful to the cause.

no, a fire for this task must
cement in her hand, holding
more steady than that which
will glow purple and singe soon,
no quaking clink of sticks like
xylophone chimes in her pocket
will remedy the urge. she looks
around. she sees a man
puffing smoke in clouds around
his beard. he stands in snow.

please, sir, may I borrow your light?

there is a particular place on herself
she burns when it becomes dark.

it's a strange painting they make,
those two, standing nearby and
smelling of branded wrist skin and ash.