

the history of a color

you can see it where the pathway bends into the hills, across the contour, rising.
all the grass in seed and thick between the ruts and where the road falls off.

cowfields. a wooden gate.
hedgerows mark the water lines.

everyone is calling. the skies darken. piling into the north.

*

no single color in the chromatic range of green
appears in Neolithic painting.

and the glaukos sea
is the same shade to Odysseus

as Calypso's glaukos eyes, as the glaukos underside of the leaves in her orchard,
as the shimmering honey she makes

—a sweet paleness there.

*

lying on our backs in the dirt by the summer-ditch
we can hear it.

there is nothing in between. the air and the body itself
gray-barked, riven and wet and filled with its voices.

a shelter, close as skin.

*

Goethe says darkness is not the absence
of light, but rather
another kind of wave, like light,

complementary, as mind is to heart.

—color comes from holding hands,
the warmth that rises in between.

*

a pair of salamanders
 suspended in the lake
 in the middle place

wavering between day and night—

columns of gold
 descend into the water,
 deep into the heart.

still. as a match.

*

then viridis appears, and a whole family of names to mean the luminosity resident in things:
viridine, viridescence, verdance, verdure, verdet rising from within. the way knowing feels

before speaking can begin.

*

at first, I couldn't see.
 I couldn't tell between the mirror and the gaze, your fleeting eyes.
 the glance. your sunlit arms.

it doesn't matter.
 you were here. *a sudden fluency*—

eyes closed windows flung wide
 and the wind so near and ready and the brilliant canopies of leaves

and the sudden rain pouring straight down in.

to hatch

at first, it's something broken makes me look, the sharp, small flake like a tear in the grass.
and then it's the color.

we look up. *nestlings!*

*

Sunday. near the beginning, I left my car in a ditch, tore my shirt on the fence
then slept in the grass, hidden till the moon rose and the sky turned violet

and the voices came out of the wind and pinned me to the ground. tell me a story, they said.

*

*Monday. once there was a girl named Sophia. she was normal in every way but for the arrow in her eye.
over time the arrow grew and the world darkened. of course, she could not see it because it was hers
and because it slept in her eye. one day, in the way that revelation always happens, she caught a glimpse
of herself sidelong in the milliner's shop-window and she saw: the arrow like a wing with its mallard fletches nesting
beautifully there, in her eye. at first she felt shock, then shame, then a fear close to terror. and now, what is she to do?
the world is a wonder, unfixed and unknown. the self in it too. what if she recognizes nothing? what if bloodied and
blinking she wakes herself blind? having named the thing beside her
that darkens, can it be removed?*

*

once, I found myself walking down the street. black asphalt. like tarmac.
on the right, a city park with elms, evenly spaced.
on the left, a sidewalk, bright windows, dry goods, women's shoes.
in front of me, there is a manhole missing its cover. I leap in and fall.
at the bottom, I find myself sitting in a rich black earth. I see with my hands.
I touch the roots. I smell the good dirt.
later, I climb out and find myself walking down the street. black asphalt. like tarmac.
on the right, a city park, green with elms and lawn.
on the left, a sidewalk, windows, candles made of beeswax.
in front of me, a hole. it is very dark and I can't see, but for the love of leaping,
I leap in. at the bottom, I find myself sitting in a rich black earth. I see with my hands.
it is moist and warm and I want it to fit. I want to taste.
later, I find myself walking down a city street. it is night. the city lights are like stars.
there is a hole pulling me in. I leap.

*

circling. circling. dawnlight. a bear on the path in my dreams.

*

late now. Tuesday. too soon. the mayflies
rise at dusk from out of the rocks, into the current, peeling themselves
through the veils at the water's surfaces.

*

*Wednesday. something happens at the end of winter, a swirling time, when spring threatens to wake us all,
and the wind starts to blow its ruse and its danger. 'come out if you dare.' the darkness is leaving.*

I'm afraid I've lost everything.

*

once, I went looking for the elk beneath the ridge in the flats by the creek:
a young bull asleep in the grass. when he woke to my walking, he stood.
and for a minute he stared, not moving.

*

*Thursday. once in a winter desert. hard rain deep.
I am flooded and flooding. unraveled. unleashed.*

pine dropseed. mountain muhly. junegrass. sweetgrass. wild manna grass—
suddenly, he bursts into flight.

*again and again. a madness of water.
of heat.*

*

Friday morning. the window's open, binding us to it.
—eggshell blue, like that.

Saturday. nested.
little wing. clouded.

rising. to a hard rain deep.

it was a gift. the night. the sky. the wind.
a kiss. *like permission.* unfolding.

the waters

there are fishes in the story. side-by-side. a crimson thread.

we watched from the bridge. into the currents. a green bus. and a girl. it was cold
above the tree line. —we were looking for ptarmigan

in the season that fades from mottled-brown to white and the snow deepens.
in pools against the rocks.

*

*there was water in it. unexpected. mineral-carved canyonslide
we pull over. searching. for the voices. for the birth. for the fall.*

*

once, my father gathered me into his arms before dawn and we drove to the river.
I wake to the mist curling back across the water and the sun flashing
and I am blind-casting into the wildlight and leaning toward that sudden pull my heart
racing.

*

*voice, tongue, lips in the wet world under—
fluid and scaled and cold. is that speaking?*

*to be finned and gilled and tailed and giddy and longing. to be painted.
IS that?*

*

some far slip. some rut. cut across the contour. and the summer dirt. powder. electric. or—
touch. and it pearls away, a voice no more than air.

if you lie in the sand and stare straight, you can see
how the water shapes it. how it braids. sifting. something not broke.

something that cannot break. how everything fits. how everything's wave.

*

*a mermaid in the pool in the summer surrounded
by a million screaming somebodies, and yet
beautifully alone. infinite. chlorinated. blue.*

*

first snow—first flakes. twisting. one-by-one.

a bay-colored rock. laid in sheaves so that it breaks horizontal.
we stand in the eddy. at the fault line.

what falls away is a gesture into. scree into pine into prairie.
green into blue into white.

you can feel it. the winter's night. coming in. coming through.

*

*some nights i dive down there to speak
some nights i tell myself stories to make myself weep—
then, let the tides stroke my hair. [i stroke my own hair, till i fall
myself to sleep].*

*

sometimes the lake is gray, or burnished like steel or mist or flat. opaque. repeating.
black. with the barest light on top. warmer than air. i am swimming in between.
liquid. not.

sometimes i am woven. and in it.

*

*my voice is in the crests. waiting for the when in which i want them,
see them, love them—
wish to speak, and you will speak, girl.
wish to die, and you can do it—foam only.
wish to live, and here you are—aquatic and electric and abuzz—*

*

in the story there's a crossing. sunhot. rock-gleam. the animal river.
wish to speak and my feet are rooted.

—all the stories crossing here.

*

*[in the days when wishing is having, i get what i wish for, and then i wish i hadn't]
i want the jungle-lushness rainstorm in my heart, marsh birds
on my tongue i want
to be so quicksilvered so flash-flooded up-filled
that i overflow
that i mudflow spill it
without
fear of parching, fear of perishing for the lack,
for the lack alack alack—*

and what is it that you long for that you cannot have?

*

tracks at the soft edge. heron here. pressed it. creased this. waited, stepped here
waded, watchful. the water pulls me deeper in. the little silt waves asking

if I want to be taken.

*

*the cold of it.
waking
the inside-out of it. oiling in fin and bone—
the slick of it. the smooth-sticky swim of it
eelings
upcurrent, in wave, upstream, in slither— in deep*

*

and the bird, this heron, quickly sharp now
lifts—till her wings, outstretched, for the slightest moment—slips

to the heat of it—leaps, to the radiance—the sweet bright curve of it—
bent now, curls now—lifting, up—

*

*to the backlit wingspray streaming
streamflew, droplight [having flown once...]
dripsfall, wet, falling, [having fallen]— from out of no place, from out of nothing—
to the mind dark, rock dark, wet now—*

*

to the heat of it. parsing and pouring and leaving—and dazzling.
to the want of it. —I want to come in.

the least wave

we're travelling together downstream.
barefoot. along the river. along the dry, cobbled edge. late summer.
I am trying to recall to you the first beach: a steep slope of sand.
the sudden deep water. the slip of it.

you turn to look at me. press your forehead to mine. then slow
you trace the bones of my face with your cheek. with your chin. till we are leaning
against each other. till we fall into a strange orbit. your head perfectly fitted
to the circle of my shoulder. slow wooden gears each
twist seeking into the hollows of the other. I am
helping you to turn. my hand
slips to your waist. to the curve of your hip.

I can feel you then. inside. underneath. moving toward. listening.
how you rise to meet. the expanse of you
unfolding. —I have no ground.
I cannot tell if you know.
or why you move against me (*into me*) the way you do.

the beach in my story is far from here.
a circling I can't seem to unwind.
and yet all the surfaces are shining:

the river spinning past.
the sweetnesses of the sand.
the willows. my tempest.

please
begin again.