

## *Snow and Dirty Rain*

Close your eyes. A lover is standing too close  
to focus on. Leave me blurry and fall toward me  
with your entire body. Lie under the covers, pretending  
to sleep, while I'm in the other room. Imagine  
my legs crossed, my hair combed, the shine of my boots  
in the slatted light. I'm thinking *My plant, his chair,*  
*the ashtray that we bought together.* I'm thinking *This is where*  
*we live.* When we were little we made houses out of  
cardboard boxes. We can do anything. It's not because  
our hearts are large, they're not, it's what we  
struggle with. The attempt to say *Come over. Bring*  
*your friends. It's a potluck, I'm making pork chops, I'm making*  
*those long noodles you love so much.* My dragonfly,  
my black-eyed fire, the knives in the kitchen are singing  
for blood, but we are the crossroads, my little outlaw,  
and this is the map of my heart, the landscape  
after cruelty which is, of course, a garden, which is  
a tenderness, which is a room, a lover saying *Hold me*  
*tight, it's getting cold.* We have not touched the stars,  
nor are we forgiven, which brings us back  
to the hero's shoulders and a gentleness that comes,  
not from the absence of violence, but despite  
the abundance of it. The lawn drowned, the sky on fire,  
the gold light falling backward through the glass  
of every room. I'll give you my heart to make a place  
for it to happen, evidence of a love that transcends hunger.  
Is that too much to expect? That I would name the stars  
for you? That I would take you there? The splash  
of my tongue melting you like a sugar cube? We've read  
the back of the book, we know what's going to happen.  
The fields burned, the land destroyed, the lovers left  
broken in the brown dirt. And then it's gone.

Makes you sad. All your friends are gone. Goodbye  
Goodbye. No more tears. I would like to meet you all  
in Heaven. But there's a litany of dreams that happens  
somewhere in the middle. Moonlight spilling  
on the bathroom floor. A page of the book where we  
transcend the story of our lives, past the taco stands  
and record stores. Moonlight making crosses  
on your body, and me putting my mouth on every one.  
We have been very brave, we have wanted to know  
the worst, wanted the curtain to be lifted from our eyes.  
This dream going on with all of us in it. Penciling in  
the bighearted slob. Penciling in his outstretched arms.  
*Our Father who art in Heaven. Our Father who art buried  
in the yard.* Someone is digging your grave right now.  
Someone is drawing a bath to wash you clean, he said,  
so think of the wind, so happy, so warm. It's a fairy tale,  
the story underneath the story, sliding down the polished  
halls, lightning here and gone. We make these  
ridiculous idols so we can pray to what's behind them,  
but what happens after we get up the ladder?  
Do we simply stare at what is horrible and forgive it?  
Here is the river, and here is the box, and here are  
the monsters we put in the box to test our strength  
against. Here is the cake, and here is the fork, and here's  
the desire to put it inside us, and then the question  
behind every question: *What happens next?*  
The way you slam your body into mine reminds me  
I'm alive, but monsters are always hungry, darling,  
and they're only a few steps behind you, finding  
the flaw, the poor weld, the place where we weren't  
stitched up quite right, the place they could almost  
slip right through if the skin wasn't trying to  
keep them out, to keep them here, on the other side  
of the theater where the curtain keeps rising.  
I crawled out the window and ran into the woods.

I had to make up all the words myself. The way they taste, the way they sound in the air. I passed through the narrow gate, stumbled in, stumbled around for a while, and stumbled back out. I made this place for you. A place for you to love me. If this isn't the kingdom then I don't know what is. So how would you catalog it? Dawn in the fields? Snow and dirty rain? Light brought in in buckets? I was trying to describe the kingdom, but the letters kept smudging as I wrote them: the hunter's heart, the hunter's mouth, the trees and the trees and the space between the trees, swimming in gold. The words frozen. The creatures frozen. The plum sauce leaking out of the bag. Explaining will get us nowhere. I was away, I don't know where, lying on the floor, pretending I was dead. I wanted to hurt you but the victory is that I could not stomach it. *We have swallowed him up*, they said. *It's beautiful, it really is.* I had a dream about you. We were in the gold room where everyone finally gets what they want. You said *Tell me about your books, your visions made of flesh and light* and I said *This is the Moon. This is the Sun. Let me name the stars for you. Let me take you there. The splash of my tongue melting you like a sugar cube . . .* We were in the gold room where everyone finally gets what they want, so I said *What do you want, sweetheart?* and you said *Kiss me.* Here I am leaving you clues. I am singing now while Rome burns. We are all just trying to be holy. My applejack, my silent night, just mash your lips against me. We are all going forward. None of us are going back.