

Terms of Flight

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a room vibrates with pieces  
of a life

each eggcrate part  
of a bricolage bed

a place to lay your head

.

a simple depression,  
the right to a home

.

at the end of the day  
nothing  
fits a hole  
like a hole

I thought safe  
in thermals  
forever

## Grip

Mother was a toreador of war.  
She made & held  
a red blanket

to wrap me in. Worn  
as a boot, mad as a hat of birds,  
and wild, she held me

against her.  
The plait in her hair  
was always coming loose.

As a child, I was a climber.  
I wanted to be where I could see  
the whole story, all stone & glory,

but there was a wall.  
She said I'd never  
be a nester.

pressed collar,  
prepped package

most people's first memories  
are of boxes

mine was a splinter

.

I was driven  
to the academy, pushed  
into the trees—among  
majestic elders

.

bruised speaker,  
blown tweeter

a cigarette, so  
the morning paper

.

I was drawn down  
by a pack of Camels  
on a park bench, a plastic bag,  
a picnic table people  
had graffitied

indigo takes after  
cloth is removed  
from the dyeing vat

blanket blued  
upon exposure  
to air

.

storytellers, we unfold  
ourselves and wait  
to become folklore

.

when the wood dries,  
fire

carve your name  
and burn  
the knife

to each tongue  
its own little  
unforgivable betrayals

.

I am an only child, so  
is my brother

## Slip

The scar on your wrist  
from when you were four  
and climbed the metal mesh fence  
that separated your backyard  
from your neighbors'

is nearly untraceable.  
While your parents were inside  
you climbed.

You reached the top  
then slipped, but didn't drop—  
the jagged metal edge  
at the top of the fence  
where the meshing ends  
pierced your smooth forearm

just missing an artery.  
Who knows how long  
you hung.

Your father stepped out  
for a smoke and saw you dangling  
mute as a cocoon.  
He rushed to you.

One arm around your waist,  
he held your trembling form  
and gripped your wrist  
now slick with blood—  
he lifted you up  
& off—the fence

out of you—and brought you in  
to butterfly the wound  
just days before he left.

suspended by silk  
a spider abandons  
its baby carapace

hardens into adulthood

swan to man

.

father lifting weights  
until he couldn't

son & swoon

.

then new forms make demands



## Outcome

When the caterpillar  
cracks its chrysalis, takes  
its prize—itself to task  
or flight—out  
comes flaming logos  
birdsilk razorspeak.

die-cast clapper  
no time to chime

.

I pulled the rope  
until the bell broke

wrapped it around  
my sinewed body  
until mummified

.

warm as when I haven't  
been home for a while

bed made no matter  
how empty the room

.

when I go, I go  
silent

a slippery sleeve,  
the permanence of parents

a simple  
complex structure  
on the skin

.

to contain, have  
command,  
say

I'm not certain  
but I believe  
what I said  
was *no*

Ask

The mailbox in the middle of the woods  
says *ASK*, so I do—if I close my eyes

and count to a hundred, will I be able  
to find you? I make my way

through teacups, past  
moss-laden fainting couches,

under branch-hung candelabras  
and there you are—eyes closed

reclining on a divan, nude  
except for one outstretched arm

draped along a headboard  
covered in vines.

we spark-test metal  
to check if it's ferrous

we span the galaxy  
but only that

.

a discrete fluid  
until it is arrested

.

I am because of you  
biting my lip

## Glance

Sarah's dropped her baby's bottle—  
I kneel to cobblestones  
to find the shards.  
She thanks me from the corners  
of her eyes.

With eyes of his own  
for that lost bottle, the baby goes  
from whine to wail. He flails  
his tiny arms, born for  
holding on. Which pitcher,  
glancer, glass, will he grow up  
desiring most?

Gravity has one answer,  
laughter another.

## Rise

No student ever gave me an apple,  
but if she had, it would still  
glisten shellac red  
in fluorescent classroom light.  
It would still taste underripe.

Of course, it would be plastic,  
in its own plastic orbit.  
Whether we rise in rapture  
or objection, gravity corrects us

like tired satellites. You laid your head  
in the crook of my neck—  
the space between my baby heart  
and lizard brain—and slept

the entire flight. I liked my body being  
a drumbeat to your dreams.

the evidence is in  
you already  
drank the contrast

backsliding to the package store  
for a bottle despite  
the promise

.

on bad days  
I would rearrange myself  
if I could

take my DNA  
and make it spell  
&



## Commit

i.

The point is to extend the code.  
Age the line, follow the keynote, keep  
the campaign alive. See pop. See king.

See your college buddy's family photo  
on the fridge, Dad asking  
*Think you're too old to donate?*

See yourself in carbon  
copied everywhere.

ii.

I've got a bee in my bonnet.  
It's buzzing about soccer, cookies,  
fatherhood announcing *Now*  
*is the time!* It's got a point

I don't see. If I don't respond  
you know where to find  
the safe deposit box key.

iii.

As soon as we're owned I'm afraid  
of dispossession. I'm afraid to look  
at the ring's inscription. Out

our rented window:  
the house across the street  
is a pink foam work in progress.

iv.

Find me in the closet, hiding  
in a shoebox, trembling  
in the shadow  
of my shadow.

the mist between  
the mountains & the sea

the gulf  
between audience  
and stage

.

being afraid  
you'll envy the baby  
his innocence

.

the space  
between you  
and me

a caesura before  
cesarean

.

close your eyes  
and say something

two egg-white butterflies  
coupling  
plummet to earth

she breaks free  
inches before impact  
and ascends

.

the empty tumblers,  
the unmade bed

the suitcase  
ready

Pass

Elizabeth, we're out of orbit. We've started

drifting. Knowing the moon controls the tides,  
you wonder if eclipses make the oceans

motionless. You bike to the beach at night  
to seize the syzygy. I stay home

with the windows open, angle myself off  
the spectacle. I wait for it

to transit through the house—to come—

to pass. We've spent  
our time. We've tried to realign,

but when the moon swims out of the umbra,  
we won't see each other. Take care,

or you'll make too much of the world.

I cut a hole  
in the open door

you laughed, plastered

.

when the whiskey wears off

.

you snuck out of the house  
wolf bag in your mouth

I removed the tape  
from inside  
the ring you gave me

a mouthful of want,  
a catholic gathering of forces

breath stretched  
between a moment & a mile

.

barbed wire  
where a spine should be

hands keep wringing,  
keep needing

## Grasp

In the dead of morning  
at the height of fall  
an ochre-fingered leaf  
wrenched from its branch

is windswept back. My face sifts  
through my hands,  
light breaking  
the wrists.

The answer to praying  
is what was in them  
to begin with.

thin light filters  
through bedroom slats,  
my slow closers

cleaved moon hung  
against a charcoal sky  
a cloud swims by

.

I see it all go  
back to sleep

.

a gypsy moth jackhammers  
into the pane

I'd trade forms with it  
for the wings



alone in my skin  
in the frozen city

ecstatic among skyscrapers  
gutters, pigeons,  
the downpour

I walked the length of it  
forgetting

.

hands feel  
clean in the rain

.

the devil in  
what isn't

## Survive

Today is a 5. The flood survivors can be reached  
only by air, declared the anchorman. The more I squint my eyes,  
the more I see the mountains

will never come into focus. Between protest headlines  
and news about tsunamis, I make my bed  
in a constant state

of thermal underwear—an employee  
at the Museum of Nausea.  
Sometimes the best you can get

is an honest ending. My father's voice  
will never change. It will be silver zeppelins  
whether he's addressing schizophrenics

or confessing adulteries. He will be Mister Clinical  
until home feels like a hotel. Until the heartbeat comes  
from outside the chest.

From here the unclear mountains  
seem to be waiting, to be wanting. Like a light so far away  
I'll be long gone before it reaches

where I live. No helicopter  
can save us now.

pocked & pitted  
the aged face  
of a weathered cliff  
rattles into fissures

the unreasonable sea

the moon swallows  
its pigeons

.

I was green and you  
were stubborn  
when we drove  
behind the bluff

the earth's subtle interlude,  
the pecking bismuth sky

.

I wish we hadn't  
closed the road

a boy on broken crutches  
crossing the street  
rickety, irregular

a packet of raw sugar  
opened into the wind

.

at the end of the bar  
the bearded man  
with his head

the scar  
on my right wrist

.

my small arms

Forward

You can always count on a day to end.  
You can always count on a man made of stone

to move on. Sober in foreign beds,  
I remember dreams better than when home.

The English say a wolf must die alone  
in his own skin. Whimpering & quivering,

my dog pants himself dry in sleep,  
his hunger fed with memories

of hunting. How red his dreams must be.  
We can't escape. The blade that made us

made us family. A melting glacier drops things  
and moves on.