

photo captions: a flood starts somewhere

- 1 *here comes water*
- 2 *flesh*
- 3 *tourists love riverbanks*
- 4 *gradual adjustment in clothing and attitude*
- 5 *creeping doubt. was that the flood?*
- 6 *dam*
- 7 *domestic tragedy*

statement of parts

all that belonged to we discarded
all that belonged to we split down
the middle parted like hair the red sea our ways

we lifejacked
I can't guarantee

all that belonged to we paid for
fist over hand to mouth to foot
all that belonged to we broke

we categorically deny
have no room
have no rooms

all that belonged to we exploded
under the flood inside out, out

we sink
so swim

this reminds me of a story about
vegetables around the time my
mother stopped wearing bathing suits
around the time we ate fresh peas and
carrots straight from the garden
which exploded in the water

all that belonged to we froze
lightbulb filament popped and sparked

did I even see this with my eyes

we submit

all that belonged to we soaked and fell in perfect pieces

gasp

the street inches closer

swoosh, settle
cars pass
rubber boots, swans
a gasping street

snatch photos
firemen and sandbags
waves at the welcome mat
brown tiles, blue sitting room
all those books

hands wringing wet

upstairs chairs, throws
dried flowers
bedroom an ark

a stripped room
we park on high stools
because of the inches
because of the doorjamb
because careful

our

your fingers, newsprint
clean white corners
double joints, long thighs

an eye for balance

dry skin at my cheeks and ankles
how you rushed matters
my cheek lost your shoulder
I caught your tear on my tongue

the sink

what a trick
you walled in
the ceiling sags, sandbagged
front door a cave

and all windows, shards

binliner to floodline the front path
sharks in the kitchen sink

I wish I had
we wish it hadn't
this is my doing

stinking river. we expected

those rugs of yours, tugboats
this tidal barrier
sandbag, a feeder
osmotic tension, balance
a voice on the floodline: worry

call this space diffused
no peeking
my trick walled you in

I came here to wallow in starfish

exclusion

guard welcome mats, hoard sandbags

when the bank bursts tonight every space will be relevant
gather paper, chairs, rugs: become hermetic

a draught excluder excludes nothing moist
curtains leak sunlight
roll down the windows to equalize sunlight, to get out

why complain when the season turns on us?

navigation

Home from work, straight as the crow flies, I begin to think direction from above. Made Oxford a bus route, a map, long before north and south ease apart. Tourists ask directions. I'm weathered, I'm resident.

Town centre in a fingertip, an arrow, we stamp times on restaurants and sharp corners. Two layers: the edgy geography like last Christmas, all underwater.

what colour does grass grow in England?

Roads converge like knuckle skin or kite lines, like hedges or pinwheels branching from High Street like your little town. We never left the garden, flowered and bowered, a knot in a string of street.

Calgary's suburbs designed this way, corkscrews and carriage wheels, culs-de-sac, the houses older than all the trees.

measure us

measure that first winter
a ruler, eked points
soap grain on fabric

a concrete bridge, thick rails
space to spy on city centre

Oxford, Calgary settled by rail
ox trains, wet buffalo hooves
freshwater stained by swans and geese

measure us

that first winter: brown, blue
cold loomed, a gargoye

envy us both for our sheer dumb luck

does this sound hollow to you?

the first regret

I liked this bridge
lonely for mountain stone, stone

refracts bees and midges
eats sunlight and looms over the river
shakes with occasion

I liked this moss
creeping between stones like mortar

I never once saw the bridge from its side
or paused, crossed the humped spine
on wet, steady feet