

CHANTING INDOORS

For the fish are drunk again
in the streets of your city.
It can be hard to find a ring
for every finger.
With the beads and the counting and the indoors.
With the mountain at the back gate.
And where to house the glass star.

It happens in myth
every time a woman looks over her shoulder.
She wants lunch. Points to her elbow.
First salt then boiling water.
Demons soaked in the sink.
It happens wherever we are silent.

For a pilgrim needs water. Weariness.
Two fish saved in a jug.
The pilgrim is a body
poured from cup to mouth.
In the end it will be as when we first shook hands.
Fires near the city.
The mayor rinses her vest.
We look at our legs and ask will they save us.

LYRIC

Your friend and his brothers of coastal address
don't look good on paper.
In every corner a ghost
falling to its knees,
too much hope at the mouth.
They study English desperately
but won't remove their shoes.

This is being light.
The best light we can find.
A woman gives a man
her intuition.
He pockets it in a game
called Pass the First Jewel on Your Left.
And your friends, the whites
of their eyes are blue.
They make our nipples into poems
in neighbourhoods where coffee is roasted.

Even when we are naked
lions caught in traffic,
we stupidly split our lips
remembering.
A woman kills a man
and he becomes a piano.
The next time we meet
it will be too romantic,
just a few words and a thousand
intricately carved boxes.
Let us breathe into them
until we are dead.

IT WAS ONE OF US, NIGHT OR DAY

I asked to follow the thread and you said,
Have faith and drink water.

Leaning on your language,
I forgot my luggage:
pictures of a many-tiered virginity,
unlikable characters, their battered shoes.

Each tree had to be thanked
so I set to my task.
Some of the spirits were eating candy,
some had apocalyptic faces.
They asked after my bags,
if my brother had given me vitamins.

Dogs named after our distant relatives
dropped bones at my feet.
The spirits urged me to hold up a branch
and act like a magician
but I refused.
Since birth I have been afraid of stories.

It was my mother
who took the oranges to the border,
argued with the guards.
She made appearances in cash only.

We woke frenzied, unable to spell.
It fell from our mouths: *We are bridges.*
More and more of us resonate.
I can't remember, but I'm sure it was you
who finally told me
it doesn't matter if we run toward it
or run away.

ONCE

It can be had
by friends adult and elderly.
Lonely – a finger without a ring.
In the depths of sobriety
I'm hiding the string
we use to discern a woman's character.
A train platform in the middle of nowhere.

Travelling south with a bag of licorice,
a tea jar from Japan.
The city is always late and missing
its panties. It's best to pretend
we don't know why.
I don't want you to ever lie
next to someone and not touch her
because of me.
In the dark you have to trust
the stairs.

To be tall and naked
as a tree. Transient –
we've already seen the bones.
Two fish cradling the family.
Two sisters and I am
one of them.

FOUR BRIDGES

Death speaks like a feather: yellow.

Green: death's mountain at the foot of your youth.

Red: assume death.

Love: too many poems death would rather forget.

Love: just like a little storm it topples,

making a name for itself.

River: not a thin blanket,

never a narrow

pair of shoes.

Laughter: spilled passport.

Knock: down.

The silver: walls.

If death is speaking

(sunset: specific: pleasant clock)

I'd like it to get to the point:

the boys running into the house

for her glasses.

Later she never wore them

and claimed it was our wish.

Black: as she remembers.

Tremor: you'd think it was her coffin.

Lilacs: where the old kings

are sleeping I heard

eleven ring twice.

FAIRY AND FOLK TALES

A practice of breaking night
over your knee, never lifting
a finger in the larger struggle.

New arrivals lurk outside the candle's circle.
My clinic is full of intelligent people.
My husband pregnant and no memory.
For facial hair
I use coffee grounds.
The world is very tender;
we are a village together.

Now the tongue our parents spoke of
is proof we are decaying.
Piece together the sweaty children
and you have a concern.
Not really outraged, words
clipped like wings.
We are in a fire of intelligent people
and not one knows

even the word cup will disappear.

THE BLOOD WE MEDITATE

Every sister knows the rats.
A salad to be shared
in the rented kitchen.

Her intent is to be sick in her shoes
and then walk home.
Never to grow and never to be scorned.
For the sun is distant from our table.

We buy a book of propaganda.
A prop horse from a man in robes.
His concern is our lack of.
Are we in town for a while.
Would we like a free meal.

By betrayal, I mean the waterfall
crying behind us.
Our sides ache from laughing.
How better to deface ourselves.
Surely we are pigeons
performing in the war theatre.
Surely the man will publish
his accusatory drawings.
He wants the colour of our eyes,
our hairy vision.
How strange he wants the wind
to forget us –

IT SEEMS

Dear Death,
please tell me it was you
dressed as a dancing girl
listening at the door.
I'm sorry my sisters
whispered so softly.
They had just begun to disappear
like snow on the lower mountains.

I'm sad you're not someone else,
but who is.
My parents have been skeletons for years.
There's nothing to be ashamed of.

I have three pairs of pants
with which to drive out the moonlight.
I will leave them at the port
for your seamstress.

If you return me to the seasons
with new claws, I will not remember this
crime. I will wake slowly
as a bee drowns in my coffee.

Dear Death, it is already yesterday
as we board your blue boat.

SHADOW / DISTINCTION

Boys of the frog illiterate
lighten our studies
in the man-woman-tiger church.

A willingness to be ourselves –
of little value,
carved from the lap of a god.

Something in their eye. Some man in our ear.
A year from youth
choking on good advice.

We will recognize
their teeth, miserable setting
for a play.

Our fathers dead in the kitchen,
the musicians fighting
in alley tongue.

Light at eight
in April, pigeons grooming
by some other clock.

Someone veiled, weeping
over a homemade broom.

Pulse of a wrist –
another entrance.