

I can't undo no matter how hard I try —

polaris, ceti, cygni

among them.

Because any whole sentence
would break
its promise
and find god
opening again
like a pupil adjusting
to the absence of light.

Night Two

From her window
the snow blows over the front path
and erases the way out.

The deer never raise their heads;
the dormant landscape slips
under a tongue locked
in some other narrative—

*the red-smoked twilights and my mother's hands knocking things over,
trembling with need, lugging her suitcase on her way
to the hotel room fucks, the pulsings of airline wings
then the 2AM lies to a child,
an ocean away.*

If I look closely I can see my mother weeping.

But I don't know how to make her stop.

Only here

I know how to make her eyes flutter
by pressing the delicate spot between her thumb and finger,
how to make her see my love is more than the
slimmest red smoke

at twilight—
a sketch

*of blood above her thighs, a certain thirst, a knife, the chilled
swirl of scotch, a supernatural wolf hiding in the pleats of dusk.*

But, nothing I named in her world would make her stay with me.

O, a ring of her absence,

a thin syllable in my ear,

high pitched and begging me closer
to let other women show me
how to make a dress eat my waist,

how to palm my body aside from breast to breast
smooth the nipples down,
tongue words around a cock—
the shudder of my body
obsessed by what is lacking.

All I could do was fail, but I know
how to pry a center seed from the sumac
to find the startling white spot underneath.
I can embroider a pillowslip with tight stitches
so the buds rise pale pink to any edge. I have learned
to keep her dead in the soundless fathoms where nothing else
exists.

*The red smoke, a frayed jet stream to follow across oceans.
I'd get down on my back
on the roof under my window when the dusk flooded the darkness,
and her thin features would transverse the sky of my fingertips.
With each icy breath I'd hang paper birds
in her mouth
repeating
a name that must be mine.*

Night Three

What the breaking sound is
has something to do with the weight
of her watch— too heavy
to hold in midair
while the button she fumbles on her cuff
becomes too large for the thread
it is strung on.

And the tick curves
around this transparent landscape
of bone as I hold her wrist
away from the vase's tiny bits
and the sharp swells of water.
To calm her, my hands
must learn to touch

all over again with words
that smooth cornflowers
over her skin, memory
as light as pollen,
but even that is useless.
By the time the spill's cleaned up,
the pages of *Anna Karenina*
are blued by the wet blossoms
steeping the book's pages.

My mother's inward
gaze does not let go
as she bends forward to abandon
another room to her absence
like the moment a Zen master
leans toward non existence

but has not yet become it,
or the way the palm prints
of the dying
clutch the places of grief
on our bodies and want to put
the single petal
back on the flower.

Night Four

A shuffle of snow
dislodges the sky into an unfamiliar dimension.
How many mornings have I sat next to her like this, my eyes
following the light's smallest movements along the eaves,
while shadows fingerprint
her face? Through a blink, any shaft
sets off a sudden slide.
I wait for small adjustments – the tumblings to still,
drifts to be quiet. But sleep never comes. I try to
understand how many hungers there are.

How many people
are pacing the floors in rooms, their thoughts stalled on bridges,
and how many times do their worlds break apart and start up
again?

The snow

*slants into the car window. There is something she says about
her lover's hair falling forward when he's inside her. Something about my
father's burns and sudden nausea. How near the end even a wolf with a
blackened penis slowly goes crazy.*

And her words still sting my heart.
Sometimes during early winter mornings the
clouds rearrange the landscape,
and a shaft of light is disguised as
the bridge where my mother stopped thirty five years ago. *The
snow was thick and heavy, pouring out of the street lamp as if it wanted
to bury that car.*

Night Five

The heaven that goes untended
is the first emptiness, but morphine takes her
wherever she wants: on a road curving
into steady flowers, to dreams spinning free
under waves of snow, or to grasses swaying
into cobwebs like sounds in a mute wind.

The lightest touch on her skin
makes the line to each curve on her body unfinished
as a train might stop in snow – every slowed turn
jerking against the metal track. Pain carries
its weight straight down.

By now, her gown loosens
and a button imprints her wrist without
hurting. Quiet shivers the air. There's nothing
left but a veined transparency of shadows
the moon scrolls over leaves, the bedroom,
her hands the color of camellias.

Gone are the clocks faltering in the hallways,
the tricks of time arranging absence,
our phantom meetings under some
embracing willow in the back of my mind.
All I have left of her is what kept her
from me – that place where there aren't any tracks
after the deepest snow comes
low in the trees as the final exhale.