

Aubade

On this, our last night, we pack a picnic of
cake, champagne, tangerines and grapes,
and drive slow to your father's fifty acres.
Past the cattle we creep to make our nest:
layers of quilt, black-eyed Susans, stones slick
like those we skipped over the pond's stiff fabric.

I cannot see the whole of you in the light
of candles and weak lanterns, just sections
of trick bioluminescence and your tooth and eye
glittering like dolls' do, but in the darkness
I feel even more than your material.

Eyes pinched, we do something like praying
that the dawn chokes in a fevered sleep. Hours
peel back like citrus skin. We do not speak of
tomorrow or its consequences, even when
your tongue is all coffin velvet and ash.

Suddenly, I jerk as on waking. The earth bellows
open, a roar warping the air around my plummet.
Pulled down a tangle of roots and iron cables
like the beaded curtain in my parents' doorway,
I'm struck to breathlessness at the planet's jaw.
In the wash of a pool I steady. Dirt-caked face cut,
leaking blood into soil, makes stinging iron mud.

I sweep the stone for a shipwrecked you,
and I finally find your body, slick and ragged.
Without light I can't quickly tell your outside
from what's in. Shuddering, my fingers creep
to your wrist and find a living tick within you.

We eat cavefish, drink dark water and forget
each other's faces, the color of light—
trapped like two doves for a wedding.