

DESIRE PATH

A Collection of Poems

by

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But though I tried so hard
my little darlin'
I couldn't keep the night
from coming in.

—JOANNA NEWSOM

Night Basket

It wasn't a hand holding a lantern in the dark, the kind of *follow me* I'm somehow primed for. It wasn't beckoning me forward, the light still seaming the door, still saying *stay*. It was a disembodied hand clutching a small basket— at 3am beside my bed, almost over me. It was like someone had broken in and cast a spell that would materialize out of context to terrify. I tried to bag it with a blanket. This time, to catch it, to pin it down and prove these realities I hold between sleep and waking. It was a hologram, a mind-made image, but I keep wondering

why the hand, why the basket what was inside of it? Maybe nothing. I think, the air in the room and the door I opened, just to sit in a sliver of light. To not be alone. I wanted to take it and carry it with me. The emptiness of it: an invitation to gather and fill. And small enough, yes, that there would be something left behind

A Shrine We Built for All the Things We Couldn't Hold

The red sweater my late grandmother knit,
the one with pink elephant buttons.
Wax lips, still in plastic.
The honeybee we thought was sleeping.
Thank you notes you wrote
but forgot to send.
*What can we dig out
of this collapsed house?*
Dried goldenrod for good fortune,
a willow branch for weeping,
for drying tears.
Playground sound— jarred in blue glass.
A photograph of a dove I found
and cared for before delivering
her to a rehabber.
A basket of pills I tried,
and sometimes still take.
The cat's teeth I found on the rug
in the living room.
My hair: a mousy cloud I build
from the brush, the shower wall.
The "baby's first" book I haven't bought.
Twenty cobwebs, perfectly intact.
A mud-rusted horseshoe,
 all the universe's luck in the form of oil and vapor.

What if you burn into atmosphere?
 Light yourself to see the cave walls,

flicker like a magic trick,
 baby stutterwick

here and gone, like some
 miracle we saw, but didn't save us.

Here, on the same table
 from four days ago,
 if *amnio* is *membrane*,
 it was once a *vase of blood*
 drawn from a little lamb.

centisis a *pricking*
 for a test,
 for a cup
 we prayed
 might pass

wooden cross
 hidden in fist,
 pressed in palm,

I try to lose us
 for the duration
 of the procedure *to go* *go on*
move toward.
 I try to muster
 to muscle
 my doubt.
 I spoiled it
 I couldn't.

Try to hold myself
 still, the needle
 pins me in place, a *stilling*,
 a *fastening*

like a wax mother
 fast against velvet
 in a plastic niche:

a pocket saint

you could forget
in your junk drawer
until you needed her.

Sound and Vision

In the ultrasound, an embryonic-celled
 blur gone rogue. When they hand us the
 paper: *sacroccocygeal teratoma* clots
 the top of the page like a
 fat tongue: sluggish bit and
 bloodied. We cipher: *geal* is
of or related or caused by the earth this
 bone: a divining rod in which we
 have discovered we have fallen
 out of
 favor.

Teras is Greek for *monster* for *marvel*
 for a genus of moth: *the grey marvel*,
the terror of the Lord, His splendor.

The Philistines, plagued and blue, eyed
 the sky for an answer: sent a cow-yoked
 cart and aside the Ark: five gold mice, five
 gold tumors. A guilt offering guild
 offering and I am melting rings and
 coins and if I send it up the road,
 will I know it is not God's hand
 that struck us, it happened to us by
 chance.

A moth is a tear eater, lachryphagic:
 nourished by the salt, the water, the
 protein and fat, unfurling proboscis into the
 eye of a bird, asleep. Some moths look like
 eyes, and some, at rest, mimic bird shit. We
 make images of her tumor and give them to
 wind, but without the gold, it's half-hearted.

what if we cut and rubies cascade? all the
 dogs the bone buried, all the teeth, knocked
 and spit collected exactly here, cradled in
 veins, root-caged bones. A decade of
 swallowed bubblegum: a chew-and-stick
 mass. *What will she lose to make room
 for you?*

1 in 40,000: rare— like the coin we found

in the side-yard soil, like a gold mouse, a
 deer in the snow, no place to hide. Every
 week we magicsweep
 fleshcurtain with plastic
 wand: we measure. we
 name— ball and chain, troublehound,
 pound of flesh, parasite. We bargain: if
 you slow, if you shrink, we'll be kind
 when we cut, de-wing.
 You: moth, you

eat our tears, her blood, the lambswool
 garment of a body, holed and wholly
 constell- atory. A moth-
 er, mouthing the edge of what you
 thought was a portal, it was a body,
 goldensacred, crushed you
 your dustwing
 given back in fire.

The Baby Is a Bird,

a little gray dove
in a white egg in a nest.
The baby is pigeonmilk, is eggshell.
The baby is a piece of polished citrine:
the baby is turned over in the hand, is considered.
The baby is here and she is gone.
The baby is a cemetery swan.
The baby is cutting water with feather;
the baby is featherwhite, is gooseghost.
The baby is a plane passing overhead
in which you imagine you are traveling, too.
The baby is taking you places, to tropical zones.
The baby is an orchid bloom on a tree trunk:
The baby is speckled, the baby is not.
The baby is shadefruit. The baby is a bunny
in the yard, cloverdrunk, the baby is the woodpile
the bunny hides in. The baby is a coyote,
how is the baby a coyote, the baby is not
a coyote. The baby is Spanish Moss,
the baby dips in the water when the wind comes,
the baby is dropletting
back into the water, into sky. The baby is a cloud:
the baby collects and leaks. The baby skates the road home
at night, is dispersed. The baby is a mirror maze:
the baby is nightfog, is split, refracted
in the headlights of my car, as I chase after her.

The Tow Truck Bears the Cross Just Fine

I asked if it was a 50/50 chance
and they said *it doesn't work*

*like that. It doesn't adhere to the laws
of probability. There is no coin to flip.*

they asked me, *how much karma
have you racked up? Cosmically speaking,*

*how many baby birds have you reunited
with frantic mothers? How many*

*worms have you pulled half-dry
from cement and ushered to dirt?*

Every week I asked if it was looking good,
but they didn't want to get my hopes up

my hopes: beings we attempt
to weigh down with science,

things with ragged wings,
that barely catch wind anymore,

eternally mid-molt. The darker
feathers of a bird are stronger

but my hopes are sun-bleached,
pale with time, which isn't exactly

an omen. Still, they never wanted
to get my hopes up. *We want to prepare you*

*for the worst, there is no chart
or graph, no place to plot this,*

*it grows or it doesn't grow,
or it grows so fast*

*that it punches her heart into overdrive
and she's gone and she takes you with her.*

It's called mirror syndrome,

some sad narcissus reference.

At night, I pass a tow truck
somewhere on the highway,

one headlight out, like a wink.
Deuteronomy 28:18 in chrome script,

on a black hydraulic crucifix
in the cab, a button clicks

the top out like a switchblade
to lift the front wheels, drag the back

of a car after an accident,
or a refueling oversight,

or a repo: which is when you have something,
and you don't pay for it on the agreed-upon schedule,

and then you blink
and you don't have it anymore.

Birth Plan 1

If

deliver without me ()

want.

Baby in hands

with

or

without

order, ()

like

skin

seed

and

wing,
muscle and kin,

section by section.

Baby

unable, baby

immediate.

Rabbit Test

The earliest test was sacrifice:
a bunny injected with piss, I kid
you not, then cut open, ovaries
inspected. And how did someone even think of this?
A furry little oracle
you could catch in your yard—
tell me, peter, what's growing in the garden?

The womb is still a mystery, after all this time.
What goes on in there? I mean *really*.
Things go haywire. Things go missing
on some lonely little planet
a rabbit moon in orbit
so far away, we just pray,
galaxied and light-yearred
bunny-eared and see-through.

The Forager's Guide

*Just as I gave you the green plants,
I now give you everything. — Genesis 9:3*

It started in the yard:
one day the sourwood
called out to me
like a loaf of bread,
mountain manna.
The baby took from me
and left me wanting,
bark broken between teeth,

I wanted dirt heaped
on my charity shop china,
I wanted red clay cookies,
clumped like peanut butter,
thick and claggy, I wanted
something to slow me,
wanted sawdust
from the lumber mill,

and a coal slurry McFlurry,
cold and combustible
down the hatch, then I wanted
to eat the match, strike
the sulfur tip
along my esophagus
and blow smoke rings,
cautopyreiophagic,

I wanted coal seam
ice cream, whole streams
choked with alkaline mine
drainage, nitrate
powder pixy stix,
I wanted forever-chemicals,
dunked my glass
in the creek,

then ate the polypropylene
sign that reads:
catch and release fishing only,
drank PFAs

straight from the tap,
scraped and licked
non-stick pans bought
second-hand, Teflon confetti

in my spaghetti,
pre-compromised,
mica like peeled shrimp
shells, brittle and sharp,
wanted my small intestine
to shine, constellatory,
bedazzled, rhinestoned,
I wanted radioactive

lantern-glow guts,
I wanted to go elemental,
wanted carbon tetrachloride
for a half-life, halogenated
flowback, shale cracked,
wanted slickwater syrup
on my biscuit, sand
grit in my teeth:

frack fluid bubble tea
with tapioca pearl
proppants, wanted
whole hills of cadmium,
broken thermometers
tilted back like a shot
of tequila, I wanted
to chase it with arsenic

sink water, and I did,
wanted rock and stone
like a slice of lime,
and when I broke my tooth,
cracked it clean in half
on a piece of staurolite,
I wanted the amalgam,
wanted to tongue copper

pennies against palate,
to swallow the salt
of my own tears, no,
I wanted a whole fucking salt mine,
a white-bright,

glows-at-night,
 my own personal sun,
 wanted meteorites

at 45 miles per second:
 still aflame, iron
 pallasite, nickel matrix,
 windows of peridot dot dot
 chemical reactions,
 and all of Venus—
 her hellfire, acid cloud,
 tainted stardust

When everyone is gone who will deliver you?

I wanted the ashes
 from the burned-out doublewide,
 scattered in my salt shaker,
 and the snakeskin,
 sweet n sour scale,
 hung from the vinyl siding.
 I wanted gravestones,
 biochemical reactions,

bones and blacklung,
 wanted black smoke,
 dioxin from burning down
 the whole damn town,
 charred train cars
 in a mess of mud
 like pick-up-sticks
 against our scorched earth.

I wanted to eat the end of us all.

Self-Destructive Sunshine

In April, we waited for tornados
 sure as tulips, sure as whatever
 flowers earth births this time of year

a blooming wind, column of
 come what may.

Something about the sun and a blue sky
 being more dangerous between storms
 though not because we'd all been lured
 from our homes It turns out

storms are solar-powered. A hail cannon
 rusts in the field like a bullhorn, tired of begging:
PLEASE WAIT NOT HERE,
NOT US.

little *us*, standing beneath them, voices tinny
 our cheapjack attempt to reach God.

The rest of the town
 thinks the government
 releases them into the wild,
 but to what purpose? I have to tell you

the storm took whole houses, brittled us
 and all the cloudbusters think we're blue
 by some chemtrail, silver iodide sky
 make blue, some sliver of dust,
 a silver rain, but I can't blame them
 for their lack of trust,
 a cloud seed will water us

and what's worse to believe: the men
 at the helm with their weather
 machines, or God's thumb
 pressing down on me

Full Gospel

We woke to a ring
of duck down
on the creek bank
the white and speckle
castoff evidence
of feeding

and all along the back-
broken road, metal
roofs, buckled

everyone's house is temporary
and the neighbor's was repo'd
the whole house, just lifted
onto a flatbed

tornadoes don't like the mountains

or the corrugated crosses
on the highway, Jesus
was crucified here, and here,
and here and here
and next to ADULT WORLD
and the fifty-foot ordinance
that stands in the way
of his sixty-foot cross

this is what
he is fighting for

In our town,
the church on the left is carved
into a headstone,
and on the right,
a light-up FULL GOSPEL.

Mercy

Those flumes we swore floated
logs just pushed water
through a miles-long mine shaft collar.

The longleaf-pine-hewn track
runs the river
where water is power

where rockslides force
water through tongue
and groove teeth

below, the Ocoee
Salamander
and Maypops,
saddled along rapids
eternally frazzled.

In 1990, the river lifted
from its bed,
Frankenstein's monster,
and drank Copperhill
the whole town soaking
in a mirror of itself:

its clearcut plateau
trees felled for fuel
100 years of
smelting chemicals
snake the river
the land's last green gone:
 fume choked
 a dry red cough
 a Venus-scape
 Tennessee desert

acid consumed tin roofs
and nylon stockings
hung out to dry
in a cloud town
good ol' rocky top.

The Tennessee Copper Company

folded

just a few years before the storm
they took and they took and then split

and when the water, pushed
and pushed
who was left
as it rushed in
on the town.

Masa Madre

If I tell you what you can find, what you can forage
 will you do it? Chanterelle her honeybloom
 the pine-grove floor, blue-milk mushroom
 I tell you, I want beauty. Knife the stalk,
 bring it to me: earth is a flavor profile, my love
 dove-capped and paper-gilled.
 I am wanting us to learn how to feed ourselves
 wanting us to return and return and return.

Paperfruit, crushed and spooned on sourdough
 which, in Spain, is Masa Madre. Dough Mother
 I'll make something of it: this and jarred pink
 brine wick, some mustard or pepper toothed green.

In the harvesting, there is trust. First, in oneself,
 then, for the rest of us: that this is not a poison sister.

Honey, Let's Be Greek for a Day

let's be both honey dipper and viscous
 drizzle, let's be all the words we say
 to each other, let's be all the flowers
 in the yard, the ones we pick
 the ones we let vine,
 moon blooms, let alone
 the cat we let out
 be careless. Let's be
 olives in a dish, oil
 in a puddle in the center

of pulverized eggplant
 of artichoke flesh
 pulled against tooth
 let's take their thrumming hearts,
 free to break
 and be bitter
 coffee, let's be
 small in cups
 just a little at first.
 Let's be blue, like we were
 like little houses
 of which, where there is a window
 there is a candle,
 or a vase of paper petals.

Let's build ourselves into oblivion
 and then let's let us loose again.
 Let's be gods to each other,
 unfailing in our goodness
 let's altar together, I'll be Hecate,
 two-torched, threefold, dogged
 my Heracles. Let's be Hellenized
 let's commit war crimes

We can let the decades tame us
 like two pool-bound statues
 spitting water at the moon
 to find time is a bee on a string—

it comes back around
 oh, but honey, it stings.

Twelve Moons

That year, I lived on set
for the duration: May to May.

Whenever someone left
through the backstage door
the stars thundered in the gust;
paper clouds smacked the sky.

When I wanted to go somewhere
you'd push and pull the plywood
waves, and I would close my eyes
after a while and smell salt in the air.

I had a bed, which I never made,
and the quilt candle-melted
over the sides. I just couldn't be
bothered. Once, you

hung a moon outside my window
but it wasn't enough, and in fact
its distance made me sad.
The next morning, I woke

to papercrush craters,
a kind of pearly gray
so common here,
Moonians miss the splendor.

Above us: a string-suspended
2D cardboard earth
loomed like a portal
we could use,
but never did.

Birth Plan 2

no

room

for

light

in

nest

old

skin

:

gown, and

seed

feed

me

muscle and

media

I am

stable. If I am unable,

cord

will cut cord.

spit

small

like

breast

lay

with me

I cannot be

I want

to be

gone

During the Fetal Echocardiogram, I Try to Leave My Body

Ultrasound gel / almost hot / towel tuck / hand
click click / click ing. Type / drag / four-chamber
 heart / blue pulse / one way / red measure / blood /
 the way they track / a storm advancing / on the plains /
 is it too much / too little / could it be / too late?

If by extra we mean / the walls are stretched / if by
 extra / we mean the muscle / is worn like a bag /
 we put apples in / until the seams busted.

The screen / contrast pull / heartbeat sounds / like
 crickets / somehow / we conflate them / with silence /
 but it's a loud / I want to unhear / faint slosh / sea
 against moored / boat / *click click* / leg stuck to paper /
 another read / candlestick flames / sound like
wow wow wow wow wow / look like / copy-paste icebergs
 floating / in night sky / one so far out / from the city /

you can see every damn star / whether they want /
 to be seen or not.

When I Imagine Your Birth

All I can see is the tangerine
flaming katy on the windowsill
in front of me
in desperate need
of pruning.

And it'll just take a moment to pop
the dried flower heads off, pull
brown leaves.

What has already fallen
to sill, I could sweep

with my hand or a broom,
the one in the kitchen, just two
minutes. All I can see
is the honeybee
trapped between glass

and screen, asleep
for having worked so hard
to find an exit. Too afraid
I'll let her in to let her out,
I wait. I think

about how the moment is coming
for us, how you will be
born, how it will hurt—
not in a way I would choose,
but the way a knife hurts

when dragged
across soft stomach, skin
perfectly split
like a geode, open,
Red-Sea, parted; flesh

spread to pull you
from womb
though neither of us say
it is time.

I lay there,

undone,

all of me

turned out

on a cold metal tray, the weight
of you, gone. No, all I can do
is sit and watch two women
organize other people's lives
on TV. Chaos to order
in minutes.

At night I watch
a guanaco give birth,
two legs jut out
aside a guanaquito head,
mother stands, eyes ahead
probably looking for pumas.
Then, cinnamon baby

thumps onto grass,
half-eyed with ten
minutes to stand.
I lean over the couch
where my twelve-year-old son

*sits, it's so calm and peaceful,
she didn't even cry
out. Is that what it's like
when you give birth?*
he asks us.

And will it be?
Bloodsoak adrenaline
surge, will I be
holding
what I fought for?

The Gates of Horn and Ivory

He came to me
 nightly
 in different forms:
 spiders
 a wretched hand
 stretching
 from an ivory box,

a man materializing
 at my bedside
 like Phobetor
 through an ivory gate

in my room
 at my window
 nothing remains
 uncomplicated.

While we slept
 a man stood in the hallway
 all silhouette and hatted.
 I sat up, he ducked
 through the doorway
 to the baby's room.
 I shook my husband, turned
 on the light,
 sweat-slicked, fear
 sour on my nightgown

and when we looked, he was gone.

Most nights I'm left
 to count sheep while I wait
 on baby lamb, dread pressed
 to my cheek. Hypnagogic—

Legless on the table
 waiting for her to be pulled
 to unfold, I'm a cut

kite.

If I could be anywhere but here
 and still be *here*, be

embarrassing myself,
be so high I can't
remember much

be cold to the
touch:
I'm out.

Astramorph a *stardream*

my lamb come and gone
before I can say: *Little Bo-Peep.*

Before a hand can sew me
 my middle: gaped,
then pinched and seamed
with thread,
with metal teeth.

1, 2, NICU Blue

If blue was rare
 something still
 to discover,
 something to rein in:
 a blue-eyed horse,
 agallop forever
 on the horizon, slip-
 ping away—

then you, were blue, baby. My runner
 my little fancy-hoofed mystery
 kicked up and away and away and away

we saw you
 the only way humans
 could see blue:

{ in the heavens }

{ in oceans }

{ only in accumulation. }

The entirety: a billion parts
 a congregation of clear:
 quilted sheared into perfect,
 untouchable blue.

And if you were, then I was, too:
 a glass vessel

because I held
 you until scalpel met stomach,
 so white you see

vein-blue: skin
 like an apple, bit
 candycoat cutaway
 sapstick to toothtip:

this bloodhoney
 in a pressure rush—
 watch it fill back in
 on itself: liquid law.

Purpled-bruise
 blue, then came you,

candy-cane—
umbilical-blue

sky-blue,
sea-blue, celestial—
being-blue.

your legs and arms
wildfire you
from surgical-scrub—

blue, say goodbye
to the womb
in which they
press on you, measure

the red and blue
of you, take
the piss, play

connect the dots
on a cellcluster
they'll cleave

from you, bonecutter
to tail pitch
tumor in the trash,

orange biohazard bag.
Make arrangements
for pick up— no,

send to pathology
to be cut and spun

into sugar, we'll make a coat,
a rain-slick to keep out the blues.

I promise, once you're here
I won't cry anymore,
Not like I do now.
Hear me you do

an ear glassed
against peeling wall
paper, I'm blue

like whale song:

*don't go,
I'll eat you up,
I love you so*

a shut-throat hum,
a pinhole sound, I

promise you

new songs,

little one
no more
blue songs
little one.

Polyglot

I.

We learned an entire blue language: dread. We spoke it fluently with all its idiosyncrasies and exceptions-to-the-rule. We memorized its grammar and dialects so deeply, we dreamed in it. Even now, I have a hard time switching back to my mother tongue.

If blue is the most beautiful color you can imagine: in dread, it's pronounced: *gloom*. and *worry* translates to whole phrases such as:

we're so excited

and

we painted the nursery this week

and

*I bought a vintage
baby dress
with forget-me-nots
embroidered
at the neckline.*

II.

Coat translates to *shell* or *husk*, which is less like what you wear, and more like how you *are*. It's mental gymnastics, I can't teach it to you. But you can imagine: in dread— every single phone call sounds like *death-in-the-family*, every appointment is *worst-case scenario*

At our last ultrasound, her heart was overworking.

They sent me home to pack a bag. The instructions, impossible to decipher: a travel-size bottle of marmalade soap to wash myself head to toe, a bag for me, a bag for her, my birth plan, which I now understood as *nesting material for birds.*

III.

Everything from this point on is fever dream: Astramorph dream.

Pain traded behind the curtain while I worried about which song she'd hear when she took her first breath.

(Max Richter's recomp of Vivaldi's "Spring 1")

So I didn't worry *if* she'd take her first breath. Or for how long her heart might perform: a bird we knew well from echocardiograms, which sound like candygrams, but are not happy— not even on Valentine's Day.

I made everyone listen to the same song for the 24 minutes it took to cut her free:
 little bird in the bramble, little thing
 in the thicket, unaware. The violins,
 swallow-winged slicing sky.

We left language behind; even dread; especially dread, which has no wings and cannot float.

There isn't enough salt in the world
 to float dread.
 There isn't enough blue to sink it, either.

We have to fly away from it, little bird,
 up up up past the cloudless sky into

further echelons. Higher, higher
until the air is thin with mystery.
Our flock among the blue, made
for here, then made for where
ever is south enough
come cold.

Goldin's Box

In the ruby-red hospital gown
 I sequin: I shine in the theater
 charm an audience and maybe
 they'll pull a rabbit out of me

put me in the box / segment me.
 See how graceful I can be
 in a room with no air?

For my next trick

/

I'll be sawed in half.

*Bite down on the wand
 hold it between teeth*

*Do you feel free yet?
 Do you feel vacant?
 Have you left?*

I'm gone

long gone

out of this place

I'll be seeing you
 I'm on a plane
 heading planetary

good luck
 calling me
 when you need me

only chirping violins

hear anything /

I can't /

don't call collect /

I don't collect /

I soundtracked

/

even still

/

underwater

/

seafloored

I thought I'd be whisked

I'll be

sawed,

I'll be

Houdini'd / empty
as the Christ tomb
felt-rimmed
rabbitless.

cradling want and reality
like plucking a chord,
of catgut string
a resonating, that

yes, there is something there. I reach and I reach for it:

Sacred Bone

Leviticus 3:9

the bone: offered in sacrifice
 eight-eyed arrowhead

when i
 look at the engraving too long,
 my stomach roils
 in the knowledge

that i house
 this, too a
 bone, a peace of coral
 a piece offering
shelamim

to make
 a pleasing
 aroma
 to send up the fat,
 the choice. smoke pulled taught
 to heaven ver sacrum

sacredspring

this spring, the sacrifice is God bones.

osphys without
 fat, we offer You
teras. offer You this feeding
 thing, this: mountain of soft tissue
 and winding switchbacks

for Your altar
 fire: to be at a later date painted
 on a vase: i think of her,

two-tailed: a twin :: growing

out of the mirror: all teeth

and terror.

but the rest of her will be
 returned and thank God for what is left
 for what is spared from smoke

save *kokkyx* say *coo coo*. the last four bones

calling and answering: answering and calling
coccyx named for the cuckoo's beak,

the cuckoo named
for its echo:

*cuckoo, cuckoo,
what do you do?*

this cuckoo bone:
superfluous, and so always
meant to give away, to re-earth, to smoke
to echo to ash to re-geal.
a bird bone, re-heavened.

*in june i change
my tune, in july far far i fly
in august away i must.*

and all this time,
we thought we had
a choice. we thought and we thought.

Verse Hen, Song Bird

Neither of us walked away
unscarred, little hen.

Purplepink pucker:
our stripe, I have tried

to find in nature. It isn't there.
I have smashed rock upon rock

upon rock and have not, stone
upon stone, though we are not stones,

little hen. I have hunted for it in sky.
in planetariums, clouds

and have not found it. What else
before us is beautiful?

Purple martins, scar pink
when they hatch, don't appear

ready for atmosphere, transparent,
huddled, the mother broods, eats shell

but they gray, they oil slick.

Pink doesn't really exist, little hen,
and according to *Time Magazine*, pink

is not a real wavelength, and so what
small miracle am I glancing in the mirror,

little hen? Slash-and-burn fields at snowdust
search engines: *purple and pink in nature*

all I see are flowers,
which makes me boil, little hen,
because we are not flowers.
Flowers crush underfoot,

they crumple, they tear, they cannot
stand a little snow, a little cold, a little flame.

And if the sky were white,
which it isn't, little hen, it isn't,

then maybe contrails in the sky
exactly as the sun is setting, just minutes

little hen, just minutes.
But the sky, in truth, is violet

and this whole theory falls apart, drops
like a rock through a cloud,

which is coming for Earth
at an upsetting speed, little hen,

and every pink songbird we see
in the search engine is photoshopped,

and every purple or pink thing we see
that others might think is beautiful

is something to eat
or something we could crush,
or something that could crush us.

Emesis

The miniature orchid is in bloom again – the third time
 since you were born, the light in the room
 hits how it always hits. Hits how it hit then, through petal veins
 how I looked at it, how I thought of you, wires and whirring
 machines and how you weren't alone, but I was
 with this orchid gifted to me by a person I'd never met

and how I worked and worked to keep down saltines
 which I'm allergic to, if we're being honest, but
 desperate, gnawing ice chips, and when they came back up
 I did it over again, heaving into green plastic sleeves
 a windsock of sick they whisked, and again, and again, little
 bags with graduated markings, my failure measured in fluid ounces
 why green? Why emerald green, the color of a jewel or
 the color of unease, of quease, I will ring again and again
 try again. Where is she? My sapling, acrylic boxed, and breathing-
 machined.

Some scientists believe the uterus is the strongest muscle in the human body.

Mine, cut and stapled and contracted
 in a one, two, three...heaves. To have
 a body is to be bound by limitations.

Twelve hours have gone, I am nowhere near
 no, nowhere near on my way
 and you have seen your first sunset
 while I fail repeatedly
 to sit up, to inch myself,
 waist banded and braced,
 to the waiting wheelchair.

Bestial Synesthesia

In the quiet muzzle of nearnight the
farmhouse caught fire.
A glass window burst
against heat, flame tongues poured out,
and licked up the lace drapes.

Smoke whinnied and reared, charging the
sky:
a solitary show against the curtain of
bare trees
in the half-light of dusk.

Winter wind sweeps the yellowed grass
gone broomstraw. The matte black barn,
now decades empty. The hay door
blown open to pitch. A vulture lifts
to a nearby tree.

A group of vultures is called kettle, one
is omen.

There's something about vultures
that makes them look perpetually sick,
plucked, cloaked in another's coat.
It looks like how cotton feels
in the mouth, the color of silence, this beast-
ly synesthesia. It smells like ghost
passing through a living body, smells
like
a black hole.
It comes for what is already gone. This
bird
has devoured everything we've ever lost.

And this time next month, we'll be barefoot

in the wood skeleton house
its soot-thick sludge,
soft and rainwet, not wingsharp like we'd thought.