

Mollusk & Evening

After the party, the women folded up their brains neatly
and brought them indoors. The evening
smelled like fresh wounds on ice.
Second-place. Bleached ribbon.

It struck me that I'd seen this movie before.
A white rook. White queen. Ember eyes.
The hope chest the garden snails got into,
and the gardener whose face kept changing.

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I came to understand that the world began
with the sudden deportation
of animals. Departure/arrival board. A redundant gesture.
Irregular people were just like everyone else now.

I found a warm, flattened fork on Bloomington Street
and followed the direction of its tines.
Into wax hands in particular wax gestures.
Into the relics of the insatiable. Into misguided tires.
Zero and one. Scissors and switches.
All of my refusals.

And in the square, the square. Sound of knives
against a seashell. Sound of scripts thumbed open.
Sound of sunken peach-bites.

(I was lying in my bed, trying to imagine
a blind and deaf baby. Nothing
would close all the way.)

Sound of blind ocean. Sound of black sound. Yellow sound.
The peril of not-sound. A tide going out,
on rewind. Sound of
a dead beetle deep in the crevice of a videotape.

I had heard of new rituals, new trash.
I had heard of lightning leaving a woman's body through her heel.

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Under a child's tongue, a fever climbed.
It was evening again—

Plastic lawn chairs, strewn with plastic animal masks,
beaded with water.