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NORTHWIND ESCARPMENT

I believe you, by degrees
the deer are being eaten in the lodges.
You saw the claws in the bedding. And
this:

my daughter and I
in a museum of stuffed animals looking
for a cardinal, that specific bird;
with no luck, leaving the museum
at the exit a small exhibit behind glass:

a screech owl with part of a cardinal
in its mouth. So I asked her not to cry,
and the guard explained that inside
the owl there was nothing but sawdust
and

wire and part of a specific red bird inside
of which there was nothing but sawdust and wire.
She stopped crying by degrees
the deer are being eaten in the lodges.

AFRICA

I expand my chest for the children.

There are no longer the floors
that are ceilings. There is the stone room;
and in the center of the room
I train gladiators, the breeze
from their iron nets releasing me

from all guilt
for what I am about to say:

(the lion crosses the arena and leaps;
from underneath you are shocked
with his yellow chest, the darker
hairs like the silhouette of your
daughter you wore as a medal,
through two wars, around your neck.

The ragged bronze of the spearhead
enters at this target.) She carries
a basin of water out to you. The cheering.
You look up at her and say, "but
this cat and you are dead, I've just
killed you both, twice, in resemblance."

(The last granary of Rome, the woodlands
becoming savanna, iroko and tree ferns,
and the jungle with its
low deciduous understory
which the legions burn. In chains
from Walvis Bay to Mocamedes.)

A cold sponge touches your eyebrows.

On the coast in the wet huts your daughter
is still alive
making picture books: the zigzag lines, her ladders,
and the chest of the dead cat, yellow and red
like the night horizon.