

TRANSLUCENCE

The water table's dropping in the heat,
and all the cats are out,
scrawny, pregnant, screaming in the rafters
of the red garage. I'm down
with something mild, local, viral,
undistinguished as house wine
but strange, nevertheless,
enough to outline chairs with smokey light.

Your face, kind, mildly anxious, bored,
sweeps in from the other brisk world, health.
You check my forehead, bid
me breathe onto your hand, and nod.

It's not until you've gone to sleep downstairs
and all the children turning in their beds,
turn dim and weedy, husked with leaves and soot,
not mine at all, as if the woods had tossed them
carapaced in mud, into our house, brown coppice
sprouting in their hair, it's not until

the aspirin's hollow in my ear like bees,
a drumming roar that bounces off the walls,
and shakes me from the bed onto the floor,
I call your name and wrap in rippling stars
as everything's come back. The cats outdoors
claw themselves together in a knot.

I'm nothing like you, nothing, suddenly,
although your voice comes large as dusk now, calm,
and brims around me like a well,
and black flowers in the black grass bloom.

It was like this when I had the baby.
Looking at you in extremity,
so trapped in flesh, the body's gates
slammed closed between us.
And the spirit in the sinking light,
holding its own sharp elbows.