

Elegy in which I am not whisked away

I feel a distance from every corner in the world. I offer
a woman my coat, and she laughs, and she laughs. Is it even
raining? My old eyes bloom against the blue light
of the window. Though every night I am not alone
I am alone during the day, and it disarranges me. It dissects me.
I have stopped looking for the word for it in books, or incense,
or even the huge tongue of moon on my floor. In its mouth
I see only the shadow of last month, how I held the dead
cat in my arms, how much heavier he was dead
than alive, how in the limp light of his body
there was nothing more than the limp light. Maybe this
is how winter always feels, slick and bloated, a sachet
of sweat. I slid my finger down his throat to feel a breath.
Outside, my boots sank into the snow with only that, that
not feeling anything but the sinking. On the empty street,
we made a sound that has no name. And nothing
closed its paw around me that night. It was just heavy.
I wrapped him in my coat and gave the cold flag of him
to someone else. There were no wild crows, blacking out
the sky. There was the gloss of a room, becoming something
darker. That night, I held my weight over the whole mouth
of him, felt his warm slack tongue and did not think,
then, that the body was brutal to be so, to keep crimped
behind its teeth this pocket of heat. There was nothing hot
about what later I gave my body to, how I pulled up my skirt
and the boy said, It's like that, and I said, Yes, and stubbed myself out
against the cold files of his arms. His mouth made these sounds,
and if I was not thirsty then I was dry when he left.

This is the answer to the sweating throat of winter. A scorch of water
for tea. A dead moth
floating to the surface. I burn my finger
skimming him out, drop his body
into the sink, let the clear wilt of water
take this too.