

Eager Street · Kendra Kopelke

I drag my shirt across the floor
with my foot, kick the shoes
under the couch and everything
is out of order. Even the goldfish
plant is growing in wrong directions,
its pot too close to the window,
leaves rotting on the sill to dust.
Everyone knows the women in Baltimore
wash their front steps each week.
On their knees, on Saturday,
they rub their palms hard against
the marble, as their children play
together on the sidewalk. But you and I
share another kind of order,
when you're gone, I can see
where you've been, which towel
you dried your hair with, what magazine
you read at dinner. Some weeks
we barely speak, but if we're lucky,
by morning our bodies drift together,
our talk curls to the center of the bed
like a daughter. And the clothes
covering the furniture are forgiven.
Forgiven, yet still not put away,
it's how we live through each
unfolding season. We drive
our guests down Eager Street,
point out the marble stairs,
the strong women, the generations
of commitment. It's a good story.
These things out of order make
a difference. There is a dream
inside each glass on the dresser,
each book on the floor. Cleaning
would be a lie.

But tonight, I remember back
to our first winter on a southern coast,
you were picking the beach clean
of shells, stuffing them in your pocket,
you were just a little ahead of me
when you spotted a flat shell shaped
like a fish and you tossed it hard
into the waves. You kept your back
to me a long time. You must have been
wishing hard then, for something
like our lives, to matter.