

The Storm Took With it the Wind

It doesn't matter what comes first.
Cars file down the road. Red van, blue.

He sang in the kitchen, in the car,
out of every tune. The moon out

in the morning, fog burning away.
Augustine said places should be loved

for the good things that emanate from them.
I loved the hateful smell of your nail varnish,

playing cards in fume, your son and I
cheating, sending signs across the table,

all of us joining hands, entering
through the back door of a prayer.

*

I imagine you asleep
the fire behind you a dream

on its foundation of shadow
a beloved touches your face

unlike a flower petal
unlike a blade of grass

*

Does he think of you,
of your form flickering

in and next to fire,
fading into a second shadow.

Language rounds the edges,
no one's home.

Next door the lattice a veil,
red against the wall.

*

The Greeks have a myth
for a mother and her grief

but to lose Demeter,
even from a distant country—

looking towards you
through the open fence of night,

my brothers crying
as I held someone else's hand—

*

I've slept through wildfires
miles away, earthquakes

that shook my bed, a picture falling
from the wall, the thunderstorm

that kept my mother up all night.
Where were you then? Where were they?

Quiet sky. No planes, no lodestar. A darkness
like the shadow of a map. What now?

*

O when there was no ground in the night
but our sharp breathing,

when I could hear the whole house,
who was up and who was dreaming,

my fear kept me awake to what rose
from dark into dark, footsteps

echoing down the hall,
stars opening the night,

the rusted bars in my window
warped, accreting shadow—

*

This night, difficult to move through,
a body where each bone is named anchor.

I remember the candle you brought
to my bedside, after the social workers

had gone. I would never have believed
my father loved me had you not said it.

You loved him and didn't know
that he could kill you. *He's just hurt*, you said.

All I can hear now is the ocean calling,
saying *don't leave*, when it's too late for me

to collect either of your hands
in mine, to stitch abandonment—

*

Why keep turning
away, toward where salt comes to feed.

You are what interrupts
the water,

 braid of light,
bride on what horse.

The years pass you,
pass through you.

How is it I've come so far
and am still unable grieve.

The poem would begin here,
 but with what tongue.