

## After the Squall

In need of air, she unhinged every  
window, revolving ones downstairs,  
upstairs skylights, mid-floor French doors,  
swept into the house the salt-brine,  
the cricket chirp, the osprey whistle,  
the sea-current, sound of the Sound,  
but had not noticed the basement  
bedroom window shielded by blinds,  
screen-less. Later that night when they  
returned home, lights illuminating  
the downstairs hall, insects inhabited  
the ground floor rooms. She carried handfuls  
of creatures across a River Styx—  
the katydids perched on lampshades,  
beach tiger beetles shuttling across  
floorboards, nursery web spiders splotching  
the ceiling—trying to put back  
the wild fury she had released.

## Bat House

*Turn out the light and I'll explain.*

James Fenton

It's where I'm heading

It's what I overheard

The lines in the corner

The flaming word.

It's what you expected

Your greatest fear

A chip in the teacup

Bills from last year.

It's dark in the bat-house

Beetles stuck on the screen

It's cold in the crawl space

Slow quarantine.

Don't lie to the drunkard

Question each doubt

Shadow the cat

Turn the light out.

If you meet me halfway

I'll tell you what for

Where it begins

Open the door.

It's the news in the paper

Same as last week

The sirens at midnight

Why you can't sleep.

The dog's in the basement

You lost the phone

The father keeps calling

Bury what's known.

## Lear's Wife

. . . if thou shouldst not be glad,  
I would divorce me from thy mother's tomb,  
Sepulch'ring an adult'ress. (William Shakespeare, *King Lear*)

He faked my death,  
set up this ranch  
far from my three

daughters. Suburban  
hellhole. With bracelet  
on ankle, house-

arrest. At noon  
the bully sun  
shoulders a ripe

moon. In the dark  
soaps reign. The anchors  
will often flash

their glitterati  
weddings. Not one  
daughter has birthed

the heir. *In vitro*—

be damned. I hose  
the lawn and count

the cars like fish  
slipping their shiny  
chrome along asphalt.

Which sparrow missed?  
Cordelia –  
my gutted heart.

### *The Wide Stars Above Our Sky*

Class was called *The Wide Stars Above Our Sky*.  
Charles and I enrolled while Shira planned  
her summer abroad helping those in need.  
Across the kitchen table she unfurled  
a map, flattening it down with her palm,  
then pointed to a small country near Russia.

Shira said, "Let's check out that hot Peruvian-  
Asian restaurant downtown." I declined,  
deciding to eat dinner with my parents instead.  
Chai, the puppy, was eight weeks old. I plowed  
through snow to purchase a knee joint at Kriser's  
so she would stop chewing the chairs and table.

Shira didn't think she'd meet the right man  
in the tiny country adjoining Russia.

My graduate-school poetry professor  
offered the workshop every twenty minutes.  
Black ice slicked down back alleys, intersections.  
Monuments of snow barricaded sidewalks.

Charles transformed into my college boyfriend.  
As we climbed into the blue Subaru  
I forgot to explain that I already  
was married. We drove miles until we reached  
the summer college. My professor turned  
into a high-school friend, now TV host, who ambled

around the corner of the red brick building,  
counting the cumulus clouds overhead.  
He wore only a blue terry-cloth bathrobe.  
I asked, "Will *The Wide Stars Above Our Sky*  
begin on time?" The clock said 4 pm.  
That was when Shira's plane took flight.

## *Shifting Ground*

### I. High Tide, Mid-Marriage

The streak of sun  
through slat. The slap  
of brine. Sharp mollusks  
dug deep. How love

stays calm. The plates,  
hunkering through storm,

stacked up. How water  
rises to fill

the tureen of bay  
to brim. The queen

and knight squared off.  
Slow draw. This palm,

in yours, will cup  
a sea or salt,

shell welded to sand.  
How sun arcs, crowns:

dashed gem- stone sheet,  
bracelet of wave.

## II. Stilt Cottage, Low Tide

Where the leopard shark's two-  
chambered heart hammers,  
neighboring skeins of Brant geese

doze on the gray-sheet slate,

the punctuated white  
of their tails flick the sun,

citizens of the sheen  
floating, while the stockbrokers  
dial quick calls and the judges

elsewhere pummel their gavels.  
In eel grass herring eggs  
quiver. A newscaster

announces: *Reindeer herders  
stumble upon colossal  
craters in permafrost.*

Our cottage, cantilevered  
above a strike-slip fault,  
hovers above the estuary.

I watch a lone Brant dive  
where shells lie open, cracked.  
This tendency to drift.

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