

Alison Lyons

*Throw my ashes into the ocean so I may come full circle.*

At an hour too early for thieves, when  
there's enough room to kick  
and to breathe,  
the world is having breakfast  
slowly  
and no one knows how busy I am;

I crawl great distances down  
to a science, with a twenty-one year thanks  
and a lazy left arm.  
and of all the ways I move my body,  
this is the most true.

You want to join me, but  
maybe you should stick to land.  
Your dry hands may not understand  
how I like to fall into  
a rhythm

and flip like  
a trapped animal  
pulled out with the tide.

Sometimes I don't want to come back  
up for air.

I am content coming  
back from the dead  
with fast feet,  
as if carrying the messages  
between earth and sky,  
With giant numbers clouding my head  
and every  
single  
muscle  
in my body  
being put to use.

I like to drag my fingertips while  
losing count,  
repeating only:  
Here's the open side of my palm  
and a storm moving in.  
I forget where I am at.

Sweat glands swell and  
contract and sometimes  
I get frustrated  
with the inhabitants of my shores,  
who un-tie their shoes,  
who interrupt:

How do you breathe?

How long have I been doing this?  
- in this life?

This is my firstborn.  
This is my quicksand.

This fury is thick and ancient.  
I remember when childhood dragged,  
and an old man in a jumpsuit and  
a straw hat bellowed:  
you move like the women I used to photograph,  
1940 to  
1948,

but  
kick water, not air,  
kick water, not air.

He always told me that I would be  
better today than yesterday,  
better tomorrow than  
today.  
I just have to keep getting up.

So stay down, creature,  
stay in bed  
your keys are exactly where you left them.  
You're going for the same dream again,  
but I want to be better  
today

because, Oh, old habits die hard.

and despite my lazy left arm  
that drags,  
my breath only  
to one side,  
I can not stick to land.

somewhere in the middle  
the silence is acidic and thunderous  
making the mountain that much higher  
but it just may be the only thing  
my pruny hands  
understand.