

Simon Perchik

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You teach this rag how, fold in
its corners, edges, to close
and afterwards wood is everywhere

lies down inside you
as if there is still a place
no longer rising to the surface

though all dust is patient
smells from dried-up riverbeds
one above the other

the way these shelves
were left behind to bathe you
with roots and harbors

–you teach this rag
time, cover each board
lowered slowly into a floor

that is not years later
–for the first time its brightness
turning to footsteps and further.

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Not the paper you write on
yet your arms are warmed
the way each mother all night

will feed her child's first cry
open one breast for food
the other without a sound

though you can still make out
where the flames are coming from
once these flowers are unwrapped

and singing all at once
as cradlesong –you almost hear
the hot coals freezing in midair

closer and closer to one another
–you never forget this hunger
and in your mouth ice.

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Always more –stepping-stones
scented with the slow bend
in a river burning itself out

–they tire easily
are lying on the grass
winding things up

though sometime the sound
comes from the small rocks
breaking off for the dead

then left where snow is expected
from your shoulder and hers
–there is so little room

and she is just one person
turning back a long time
without anything to lose.

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You approach from above
expect the sun
at your back, the sink

blinded by spray
the way every stream
is born knowing how

scrapes bottom
till its stones ignite
explode into oceans

then islands broken apart
for the skies still following
a rain that's not here

–you're used to this
–the same cracked cup
rinsed till its glaze

cools and it's safe
to dry your arms
the floor, the walls.

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This dirt still mimics sweat
lies down alongside, unsure
your lips would quiet it

though the finger that is familiar
probably is yours –could be enough
has already learned to point

–in time it will silence
even your shadow
without pulling it back down

as sunsets passing by
no longer some shoreline
unable to stop for these pebbles

struggling to rise together, take you
by the hand and without a sound
recognize the gesture.