

Simon Perchik

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You bang the rim the way skies
loosen and this jar at last
starts to open, becomes a second sky

though under the lid her shoulders
wait for air, for the knock
with no horizon curling up on itself

as sunlight, half far off, half
circling down from her arms
end over end, reaching around

making room by holding your hand
—it's a harmless maneuver
counter clockwise so you never forget

exactly where the dirt was shattered
hid its fragrance and stars
one at a time taking forever.

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You kneel the way this sky never learned
those chancy turns the dirt throws back
as breezes, still warm, scented

with what's left from when the Earth
had two centers, one blue, the other
footsteps, half random, half gathered in

for stones no longer moving
—you begin each descent
unsure, around and around, entangled

as if roots would nudge the dead closer
again into your arm over arm waving goodbye
with one more than the other

—it's how you dig, folded over
and your shadow deeper and deeper
already reeks from far off and wings.

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You have to let them fall
though once the ground cools
—this toaster is used to it

sure each slice will climb
side by side and even alone
you wear a fleece-lined jacket

set the timer left to right
the way the first sunrise
turned from what was left

—it's still warm inside
and each hillside —you expect them
to burn, to break apart midair

making the room the dead
no longer need
though there's no forgetting

why this crust just through
two graves, yours
and alongside in the dirt

brought to the surface
as the cold bread
that no longer hopes for anything.

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Although the stove never moves
you add on the way roots
have learned to sleep

where it's warm –this kitchen
is still expanding, the pots
further apart with no end to it

can already set your hands
on fire –what you touch
are the stars pulling one wall

from the others, boiling
in a darkness that is not water
and slowly they reach the floor

the way light will lower its speed
pace itself so when it finally arrives
you hear nothing but its soft cry

no longer distances –what you extend
is the same heat your arms
are made from, wider and wider

held in place as if the sun
has forgotten how and withers
side by side, too cold, too small.

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Holding on to the others this hillside
knows what it is to live alone
all these years falling off-center

though you no longer follow
still back away till your hands
and the dirt once it's empty

both weigh the same –a small stone
can even things out
the way this casket on each end

leans toward shoreline, smells
from a sky unable to take root
or balance the Earth, half

with no one to talk to, half
just by moving closer –what you trim
floats off as that embrace all stone

is born with, covered
till nothing moves inside
except the lowering that drains forever.