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Life Is

a seven-mile stretch
of coastal road
in Carlsbad
California
North County
offering order
& form to the chaos
a gesture
of negotiable lines
paved sketch
astride
the ocean's face
a reminder
as we drive
at any moment we could
become one
with vastness
the wine-dark voice
of sirens
this
grassy slight inland
village
calls us away
from curiosity
for pilgrim mercies
know
we will seize

the eastward road

toward

predictability

safety & land

never

turning west

toward the wild

terrifyingly

wild salt spray risk

smudged

sand-lick vignette

fools

we trust this coastal road

we miss

the billows we

miss

the beauty.

Of Your Flesh

When a glass of ice water
is more love than mother's eyes/cold as Taiz
she who has become ruffled
shadow-pattern slipping around corners and hallways.

Who's there?
Is that you? Don't take the child:

The airport's noise tonight like
distant roars (some final curse) from lions
left to starve in Yemenite zoos,
fresh complement to the rain

tonight's rain which mimics
my lifetime of heart beats
now puddling by the sliding/glass/door
as if to caution ghosts are gathering

ghosts are being released.

Can you accommodate us?
We can sleep on closet floors or a single eyelash.
Our touch like urushiol rash.

Mother wrote her letter
but circumcised the bottom third: scissor/frenzy
inflection before
mailing. Just so

I know she wants to say more
You/rotten/child/insultme/goodbye
_____ A lot more. Maybe that's why

I use my own teeth (nervous habit)
to open this tongue,
the red release so nice so warm across the bone
an ivory birth
sliding/slipping
a series of drops from the rabbit's ear
into my own magician's hat.

Accubitus*

The word
sounds like a rare
Saxon virus
or some cabbalistic
chant

but tonight
in a quiet house
nine years of marriage –
our marriage
finds

accubitus
in a four-poster bed

headboard like an A
for two Cs
one beside the other
tucked under
a cool cotton U

quilted covering
thick B
wilted wedding gift

I stack pillows
like stones
perfect crucifix T
wall

and watch
the lexicon pages flip
to the failure
of US.

**accubitus* (noun) the state of lying next to another in bed without touching (Coxe's *Medical Dictionary*, 1817)

Requiem for an Average Woman
after Marge Piercy

This average woman was living as usual
and given jobs that paid,
dinners, trips to glittering cities,
and promises the size of ancient temples.
Then, in the twilight of middle age,
her husband said:

You have wrinkling skin and a drooping belly.

She was well respected, considered a talent,
displayed acuity in thought and action,
not without a large heart and sexual drive.
She woke up and went to bed ashamed.

Everyone knew she wrinkled and drooped.

She was encouraged to be patient
and pray, instructed to be active
in the community, attend church, count calories,
and smile. Her faith was slowly abraded
like a dust-bowl plateau, and
her marriage became snow.

With a lover's hands all over her
heavy pit-stone belly,
she realizes she never loved these men.
She loved only what they lavished on her.
She wanted to love herself
but never could.

You are so beautiful, this particular one said.