

Simon Perchik

Hiding on this tiny rock  
its light is falling arm over arm  
brought down as hammer blows

and mountains clinging to the sun  
the way mourners will gather  
and aim for your forehead

–it's not right for you dead  
to lower your eyes once they're empty  
–they have so much darkness

are still looking for tears  
and all around you the Earth  
splitting open a single afternoon

up close –you are touching seawater  
without anything left inside  
to take the salt from your mouth.

Between the tall grasses and water holes  
the next hiss would be its last  
though you splash these iron bars

with no way out and wait  
smell from smoke and death  
—it's a cheap grill, made for a backyard

and the need for constant water  
as another word for leaving  
—you burn with ashes

taking hold the emptiness  
to let the fire go  
become airborne :a season

among the others, fitted inside  
two rivers, close to clouds  
where there was none before.

You stir this can before it opens  
as the promise a frog makes  
when asking for a kiss :the paint

warmer and warmer will become  
an afternoon with room for mountains  
and breezes close to your shoulder

though that's not how magic works  
–there's the wave, the hand to hand  
spreading out between the silence

and your fingers dressed with gloves  
as if it was a burden and the brush  
raising your arm the way this wall

needs a color that will dry by itself  
leave a trace :a shadow not yet lovesick  
no longer its blanket and cure.

With the rigging that lowers sails  
you dead anchor :every grave  
becomes a full-blown sea

though you keep dry  
the way rafters are gathered  
for dust as a place to rest

be showered by minute by minute  
and the small sparks mourners leave  
to jump-start the night sky

—between two afternoons  
you are burning rope  
as if there was a name for it

and now, lit, where nothing shines  
but this shadow you let come closer  
stay, tired from the start.

All those nights two suns running free  
–with a clear look at each other  
could see how bright her face becomes

when the window pane unfolds on fire  
spreads out that long-ago afternoon  
end over end though the shade

is reaching for the sill –a constellation  
and still her arms are frozen open  
as if this snapshot was trying to breathe twice

make you think you are covering her eyes  
are in the room alone, holding on to what's left  
letting it flicker, wait for something in the light

to move closer together, fit into her mouth  
so it can see you as the bed no longer made  
as the wall and empty picture frame.