

INVISIBLE PLANETS

A stranger's bare palm on my lower back so I think of sand
 Unwinding my nerves, though no one told me how
I've been here before, slow tracing an alphabet, sinking

Words that don't exist yet, under this skin, under this half-light
 Some knots are stubborn: invisible planets
Objects & bones dissolve & only the wrist doesn't bend

Easily, or even by accident, my arm long & pale, a swan's neck
 Striking a pose I've always longed for, a periscope
A particular body drawn in black & white, shaking the season

Out of our limbs, licking the salt, watching the sky
 Solidify & fall into our salad until the smallest leaf
Is just pretending to be bright & worth picking

Little miss green thumb had a garden of lies, a closet of lovers
 A bowl of fresh eggs, with a whimper, what fractures
Each memory explodes like tossing out the stemware, sparkling

Shards in the storm cellar, in spite of the map, I only think I see a lake

When you open your mouth, there is little to latch onto
When we excavate an ant colony it calls for tunnels & antennae

Loads of cement to match the walls we've unearthed, what an abyss

Believe my veins grow stronger at the sound of spun wool
Scratch my back with a foxtail with this dust-covered feather

Cut the circuitry between all things discarded & who comes up

Empty, what is the most weightless word you know
I could be joking, my heart could be failing as we snore

A weak aorta or overpass, because the slightest murmur

Alters the architecture of a body, note the glare of new
Hubcaps, note the grit from a street sweeper, so easily hypnotized

By dust & every time my heel slips I have to count to dawn

Pour another prayer in the birdbath, a dream of
Smoother skin though squinting is inevitable, make a fist

Now an open palm, until we're back to sorting grains of sand

& every time I hold the phone I imagine whales
That will not speak to me & only you can translate

I CAME, I WEPT, I CONSOLED

THE LANDLOCKED TORTOISE

To not want to be held by anything other than the first interval.

To believe in only the wind that is happening now.

I came, I wept, I consoled the landlocked tortoise.

Wave to the lady in the tower.

Someday you too will go hunting for the strongest root system in the forest.

Finding fistfuls of prairie grass that feel most like family heirlooms.

The second and third sparrows are intent on achieving new levels of brightness.

The village sundial will never know otherwise.

Every peak hour begins with water, a softening of self and sand dune.

There is no such thing as a retractable philosophy.

These rocks play for keeps.

VILLAGERS AT THE ROUND TABLE

Did you throw the branch to me (to the scorpion?) or did you circle the garden for someone else?

Do you remember cursing the first crevice that caught you, getting lost in a landslide, or losing track of time?

Have we carried this velocity in our limbs before, or are we holding our breath in order to slow down?

If you tell me the reason for your quivering, will I be able to find the same spot on the map?

If you don't trust me, cock an ear to this altitude.

Can a century become a sentence, a fever become daylight, without rearranging more than three pillars?

When he learned to swallow flags, did you hollow out a nest, a cocoon in his collarbone?

Not a chance, not a chimney delivering silk plumes.

If he ignores the smoke signal, will the lightning know enough to strike twice?

CONFESSIONS OF AN ERA

Practicing our potluck etiquette has us
Dishing up the same old dirt

Every historical meltdown hackneyed
Into monogrammed handkerchiefs

Swooning over symmetrical silhouettes
Gulping bootleg copies of bottleneck bombshells

Our temples wrapped in whodunit sagas
In seaweed masks selling flotsam to jetsetters

Cutting our teeth on wifi
Gutting our words like weeds

All in favor of sun-fed habitats
Sidle up to this worn saddle

Don't worry dear we can't capsized
With the wind at our backs

Steady sail into an onslaught
Of epiphanies proper

Propellers carelessly tied
To perfect endings

To each wrist her own rope trick
To each anchor an ocean

Suspend two salty loopholes
Instead of suiting up for hunting season

This is not another love song
Silly matchmaker

I think your baby's whole parade
Needs new spiritual hardware

Thus spoke the bird from above
I think you even swim like me

Hungry for alphabets
This arrow's armspan

Longs to needle new distance
Tying vines to telephone wires

Greet the rosy ribbon cutting
What a city of a gift unfolding

Gritty landscapes to gorge on
Feeling lopsided and long lost

Though I've never broken a bone
Or buried wavelengths under skin

Just an overbite to speak of
Moss mouthfuls

I'm a knock-kneed envious mare
As a matter of fact I'm licked

You can tell me anything
Cross my hard hat

You can weep windows if you want to
Croon *desert*

Hum white noise
The things I long to hear

THE SEA HAS GROWN SMALL INSIDE US

Steady collapse instead of conundrum. Where is the arrow when you really need it?

This keyboard is a hoax, as in a deliberate body double dons an elaborate maze and reckless chatter. Thinking it through. Eating her way to the outer edge of.

Today summer is scaffolding, a precarious diagram. You can follow any line but it will only lead you so far.

Forget the outer hemisphere. Forget aerial views. Every day a new destination, more short-sighted than far-flung.

No matter that she has never fired a gun or lacks 20/20 vision.

Still could take to the streets in charades, string a set of lantern halos and salivate on pop rocks. Could craft a secret handshake that can only be achieved at certain radio frequencies.

Replace the leaky pipe with a pencil. Say everything five times fast. This is yet another schoolyard trick for healing.

Until hair is tied in knots. Until axels become axioms.

We cradle the feeling of friction in capillaries, magnified, then record it.

Others wait for sounds of running water. Open-mouthed and optimistic.

We have learned and we are learning: the source of some rivers is bedrock, the choice of some pirates, bone.