

## Homecoming

I never thought returning would be like this: my hair steaming in the curler  
burning to dream. cigarette stains edging closer to mother's bleeding lip as if wanting  
a second death, this time for gods to see & compensate in memory.  
again the turntable brings fish hearts past skins anything but water  
to my mouth, so instead I gulp dusk into dormant napalm, sweating temple  
drenched in pleas pretending to be prayers. during dinner  
beer-bellied uncles discuss dead countries & the economy  
of a home, how nobody left but all the windows opened light flooding in to drown  
the bulbs blue- hot to touch & through the wineglass, I'm refracted  
into any beautiful stranger with glass lungs. children will remember anything  
but the bed they first cried in. tightening walls the worst weapon. here,  
even the moon clouds in liquor, cratered like mother's skull when she  
waves me out the house & I learn how to christen everything a relative of grief:  
smog the bloodied dawn lifting to let shipfuls of traitors through, my name  
some seafloor stone drunk fish sewed into a body. at the backyard lake,  
fraying threads on my jeans float, unmoored seaweed feeding on or drowning in the foam.  
two mirages surface: mother's closing eyes & the elegy I prise from between them—  
something about redemption but in the thinning ink I only discern blades. basic  
violence. into the wake I wade in. widen. defocused prey slinking  
out of the clearing & into the tripwire horizon. god, let me into your silent  
burning womb— your asylum for those who only remember. in desperation, I throw open  
the curtains & light floods in to blind. the umbrella a sheathed angel,  
hot breath fogging mother's portrait wet & alive. I scratch the glint  
in her chipped eyes begging *light me like a fuse, not a god.*  
the electric fan whips hair into my mouth, charred strands searching  
for a whiter place to invade. the waves are rising still—  
in haste I leave bayberry pits on the dresser tearstains in the darkening sink  
an effigy-shaped hole instead of angel to man the city, a faulty panopticon  
from which too many eyeless daughters will escape, shrivel with milk  
crusted on their lips. mother resurfacing in the polygraph's reddening edges.  
afterwards, I get in the car & watch the house evaporate like smoke  
after a gunshot. & pink palms blistering in surrender, I am a sapling  
the sky smuggled in its throat & forgot to water I translucent child I fist that curls  
deepest into the earth I was birthed from, begging god for a second, sharper skin.  
the earth lisps into black crescents beneath nails in response.  
salt stains on my shirt rogue planets. galaxies of heritage & other detritus.  
I scalpel exit wounds into marble archways & this desk into bloodless casket because only gods  
marvel at how beautiful brief things are: ginseng steam bruising the lockjaw wall  
*hostel* fogged to *hostile* the sun so close I could trace its sins saints  
burnt myths into my cranium, so bright I reincarnate with scars  
etched under my tongue. because mother, you know this best—  
we were never good at saving anything that once belonged to our bodies.