

Minor God

This crab could be the oracle: see how his eye stalks are portents, and the ancient space where a mouth would be opens, the clicking mandibles moving like clock gears. He holds time in his mouth. And it opens, as if to pour tenderly the contents of the future onto the sand that is dark with rain. The shine of his shell is a looking pool where the sky can see its face. This crab with its leg jousts, claw joints, and articulations, knows something about being broken open. Knows that escape happens sideways, with an eye on the past, the scuttling under rocks where everything else is starfish and seaweed and barnacle blasted to stone and trying to hold on.

Altar

Leave it room

to breathe—the wick awake.

Feed it leaves. Don't fear

ash. Singe the sticks, the edge

of the chapter. Blacken the tips—

bracken, bramble, imagine the wood

with a fire in its heart. Animals

flee with their mouths open.

Or imagine broken branches

whole again, let the timbers

turn back into trees.

Gutting the knife (Ma'akhelet)

No ear but cheek

No chest but belly

No hand but handle

No arm but shoulder

Bloodless meat

on the cutting board—

I don't like cooking.

I don't like horror

films. I want things to stay

whole. I want to heal the tender

center of the wound just by

thinking it. Our bodies shouldn't be

meat and breath.

No heart but bevil

I sharpened my femur

until one edge could

slice you, left one

edge dull as the horizon

divides sky from not-sky.

No foot but heel

I won't imagine
the muscle you needed to
stab
her and then yourself.
It went into her belly like—a knife.

No eye but spine

The hunger edge.
When you cut your throat
what voice, what prayer
did you mean to set free
so it could let go
of you? A red song,
now, a story
craning its ear
with its eyes closed.

Genesis

This was the year of no touch
but the touch of our own hands,
our breath pressed to our own
faces. In the beginning

anything could kill us,
and then we learned it was the air
in our exhalation
that would kill us. The trees'

green leaves and the garbage
bags taped at the nurses' wrists.

Particulate invisible
death, from which we hid

in our rooms that were empty
of time. The screens that turned us
into portraits
for one another—*I'm here*.

When a baby is birthed we say, she is crowning,
Cupped in the breath of the world.

Exhibit A: The Voice of God

In the first grade I kneel behind a trash can heaped with crepe paper flames. I am God's voice. The branches shudder. I am God's call for burnt offerings, the scent of smoking flesh. My father shudders in the small attic room of his sickness. Mount Moriah unspools its summit road, Abraham climbs, leading God's burnt offering by the hand. The span between the knife and Isaac's chest is a form of closeness. The ram like an afterthought, enough testing now, let us eat. In the attic my father stamps on the voices in his head, but they keep burning. Soon he will come downstairs. The angel will not stay his hand.