

INGRID *sending them back*

You keep bringing me reasons
to live, like so many dishes
from the dumb waiter

in the anarchist's restaurant you loved.
It's your analogy, so can you explain
the risotto in cuttlefish ink?

Or how to eat the secondo of mantis shrimp.
A sea cicada, as it's called,
so powerful in its element, it could

pulverize snails with its clubs
or break a human finger.
How am I supposed to take it,

with the swimmerets trimmed away
leaving only the alabastrine shell
to lift, so simply? Just like that—

yes yes. But how could I partake
of such a creature—so cunningly lethal
and blameless?

When any day on earth was like that—each
a plated creature, gorgeous, humiliated, just
what I wanted—but couldn't touch.

INGRID *of her reentry*

I could always kill time on Laysan Island
in McBride Hall the cyclorama with 106 birds in poses
and the Corwin mural for credible sky blurred into

coral beach, bright on bright, bristling with realistic grasses & shrubs,
surf-spray painted at my 9:00 and my 3:00, and lose myself
in a story of climbing to gain the shore, like Dante “with my last breath

to look back on those lethal waters,” senza joy, senza relief
but the thrill of being zeroed out
unresumingly new, feel grit-bitten tender-

footed and chilled with my teeth chattering, I’d still find
a sooty tern’s nest and single egg to prize.

An unguarded atoll before the feather poachers, it was a home

to 8 million birds of 22 species—from albatross to a Laysan rail to
the ruby-red Laysan honeyeater. Here you may still see
how “A male magnificent frigate bird attracts a mate with its red

inflatable throat pouch.” Gather we now, why don’t we,
around the throat, standing—as always waist-deep
in the invisible waters.

You can still press the button for surround-sound of moan and chatter—
even glass-enclosed. Or keep quiet. Who’s to say we couldn’t
climb up into new lives—I couldn’t have lasted longer—as a honeyeater?

INGRID *of shelter in place*

I need more history—since you don't know more
than a few days' worth. Picture me
with Zia Adelina's cleaver or your wife's voice.

I'll take them—even your sister's upstairs barricade
the dog-chewed door with a single sliding
bolt, behind which she huddled with her girls

one night, when her ex raved from his den
NO body better set a fucking
FOOT

down HERE! I've known women like her in Roanoke
and Iowa City. She stays upstairs but casts a powerful spell
under which her body is the shelter—

and shield, which she and the girls can believe in
so long as they can keep counting
quietly - One Mississippi Two Mississippi Three—.

INGRID *breaks the record*

Good as a diver before I died,
or *getting* good,
I practiced holding my breath all the time.

You know the folktale about *Colapesce* whom the king sent
in search of the pillars upholding the island
of Sicily. One day, two days diving—

each ascent taking longer than the one before, fruitless.
Finally the third day the king, wild-eyed, tossed
his crown into the gulf

after which *Colapesce* plunged. Hungry as ever
to see the bottom, I like to think he must have
glimpsed the furthest depth

through that circle of gold, before
he released the chickpeas in his hand—
and in spite of myself

imagine him still among brittle stars
while at sea-level, you—and all the living merely
count the beans that surface.

INGRID *having missed her French exit*

I died the Tuesday after Easter,
the spring you moved around the block
into the bigger house, tore up the white carpet

from the dining room, planted bleeding hearts
like your mother's in Cumberland—
in the shade of your own pines. They towered

as high as Adelina's well was deep,
where the silhouette of your own head, down
in that circle of sky, thrilled you

as I thrilled the day I stood on a plinth's edge,
beside the Black Angel in Oakland Cemetery.
I came to her waist like a child and could only kiss

a fold of her robe, under her heavy bronze wings.
"Take it from me," I said, but without witnesses.
Nothing happened—no instant

death, not six months later, not seven years. The curse
wouldn't work if you wished for it. It took me
20 years until I succeeded, some night

you were sleeping all in one room, the boys too
scared of their new beds—and the unwished for,
whose wings kept tossing outside their windows.