

bren simmers

a woman tells a woman open is simple

simple as spreading molasses over cashew butter coaxing it to the edges
simple as the corners of my torso on the floor weight even at each edge during
chavasana when my corners click into alignment fill with light illuminate my
chest a paper lantern stretched thin over ribs

you flicker before me your gaze seeing through valves pumping my heart open
closed a wick ignites

i panic thoughts explode like pine cones in this heat there are no walls
curling in on myself i become a shadow exhaling smoke

simple you repeat simple as stilling the mind with the breath.

after the fight

the basement door slaps hard behind my father.
there's a mark on the wall just below my penciled height.
my mother stands, dishtowel in hand, staring
while i bend to clean up the broken pieces, careful not to slip on dishwasher.
i remove the empties off the table and take them out
to the garage, stacking them with the others.

upstairs my mother crawls under the covers, i lean against her
and tell her stories. i feed her strawberry ice cream, her favourite.
i can hear the tv through the floor,
the late show my father always lets me watch.
I lift a leg slowly; she's asleep.
eyes on the door, i can hear my father's laughter.
my mother curled away from me, turns over, her arm catching mine
just as my leg touches the ground.

sun comes up, it's tuesday morning *- Cowboy Junkies*

the sun's bright border around the window,
my body in peels of light: hands rest on breastbone, rise lightly with breath.
the garden outside, its roots deep tongues in the soil.
my clothes, still damp from last night's rain,
curl in piles around the edge of my bed.
i reach for my slippers, move slowly to the kitchen.

i haven't done dishes in days, the counters are stacked, the kitchen
smells of neglect, fast and rotting food. i open the window,
prop a brick in the sill. chilled, my body longs for bed.

i pull my rocking chair up to the radiator, wait for the kettle to breathe
in the ocean air i can sometimes smell from here, the exhaust cleared by rain.
the garden is thriving, despite irregular watering. black soil

pushes up sweet peas, beans, and beans. transplanted into rich soil,
my lavender has become a small shrub. flowers dry in bundles in the kitchen,
their purple-blue like approaching clouds, the night we walked in the rain,
our first wet kiss. huddled in blankets, branches lashing the window,
we drank hot chocolate, our skin scrubbed, your breath
tentative, soft, we spooned together in bed.

the first week was the hardest, alone in the hollow of our bed,
you liked to sleep on the right side to see the garden, the turned soil
heated in thick sun, watch the seeds expand, breathe
into shoots. i remember sleeping in, hearing the clink of cutlery in the kitchen,
your padded feet, bringing me pancakes. tea mugs resting on the sill of the
window,
syrup sticky on our hands as we lay together listening to the rain.

this morning, the kitchen is quiet; tea is brewing, i sit in the hush after rain,
the silver glint of water in pockets across the garden bed,
long fingers of moisture running down the inside of the window.
i put on my rain boots, take out the compost, mix it in with the soil,
bring in beans, and small beets for soup. standing in the kitchen,
hands muddied, my fists soften, i breathe

out your face touching my friend's face; the twining of your breath.
now your hand rests on her breastbone in sleep. you walk together in the rain,
your hand in her pocket. i clear space for soup, slowly the kitchen
reappears, like my body each morning in bed.
i kick off my boots, sweep up the clumps of soil
and water the plants that press their leaves to the window.

i lean against the window sill, breathe
the smell rain leaves behind, pavement and fresh soil.
it is enough---a warm bed, a still kitchen.