

Atlantis

Without the roof the walls
stay, but a ruin. The girl gets up, puts on
cutoffs and a halter top, crosses

the street to the gas station and the river beach beyond.
In the water green grass like tongues
wraps around her legs.

She's the kind of girl you can't trust
with even a short note to her mother, fertile
in trouble. She can wear the dress without

meaning to dance, she can dance
without meaning to sparkle, but why, only a baby
would wait.

Up to her waist and only nine a.m.,
halfway through the long summer. Once she's
gone so far she has to go on in.

*[what body casts that
stir in the water]*

*

What is lost is found—in time.

*

A few axioms: follow the lines; piece the edges.

*

I arrive where killers & gods do.

I am a carver, a renovator,

not a beekeeper. Lucky ones stay away from me.

*

Yes, I've dreamed

finding the women of Irish fable: the giantesses,

stretched on beaches near monasteries, up

from the raiding sea with "fifteen ells between her paps"—

but those bones would break my scale.

*

Meanwhile, these: fine-weight, filigree. Please be patient, I have not
yet salvaged anything from this ground.

*

JonBenet

You're smoking in the alley when I see you next—
those thin cigarettes your mother died on.
The little pageant winner in her red sash

if she weren't dead would be almost as old as you. To steal, you reach
with your crushable hand past that thin angel
smiling from the Walgreen's checkout, still,

maybe for one last time, with eyes as blue as Crater Lake.
You have all the world if you'll forgive it—anything you
want, all you need to do is take hold.

*

This isn't over. The girls are waiting
for a sign, *it's safe*
on a satin flag. Her fingers have not forgotten, will

go on scratching, skin under the nail, a clutching bone
naked/ You didn't want to be the girl anymore, wanted
to grow up, be what comes next, the lion.

That one—like you she'd be a runaway by now, gone plain, wire-scarred
and where she got away, a few evenly spaced holes. A girl is a woman
is a rack to be hung with gashed sky, take it off me you say

*

The turnpike overpass where you've huddled / your life
an animal caught in a trap. Your life
a wrecked arm your life standing

a few feet away in a parking lot. For a dead girl she's lovely,
but you haven't seen how we found her. The body a sack
for the working system, liver & lungs and a scarab heart.

A fern pressed in a bible,
found years later, marked evidence a. You smoke to be ugly.
The eyes' blue an accident, hot breath, all the gray clothes of the sky & lightning ribbons.

[*Beautyberry*]

This line of her arm
we carefully trace as if fossil
of a new-found water creature.

An instrument built from her body
we made harp-pins of her little finger bones
harp-strings of her long yellow hair

plays one song / Hands

rotted to ruby leaves
so much richer now.

Oh the wind and rain
An amethyst vein opens
bladderpods rattle and
devil's walking stick

pierce me / The house of the murderer will stand
where the stream running from this crime

stops singing.