

## My rice tastes like the lake

It is not everyone's desire to swim as a fish.

I have a little dog that behaves like a cat,

it is not his fault he cannot pass the discipline test.

A fault line runs through the city center

sullen as a stretch mark under a dress;

we believe our undoing comes from one source.

An escape plan is our solace. There are words,

there are stories we never tell. She said

on the radio, *my rice tastes like the lake*.

It was a perfect sentence.

History books conflate the idea  
of human existence with errors of ethereal  
bodies. A gamine girl is a fairy; she's also poor  
in storybooks. A sentimental person understands  
narratives have much to do with him (there is no irony  
here) as in a child's game where an eructation for  
every blunder is justice. This is before the rules change.  
I am doleful when I read a riddle where the frisson  
of a feast is warded till the moment  
of an acceptance speech. Memory chastens us  
to follow the recipe to the last letter  
for utmost result. (Sturdy and stocky  
are said to outlive the rest of us.)

## Selvage: for country

Girls in pink hats peek at a sky woolly  
as the head of a cauliflower. Trees are wood;  
you said a picture reminds you of the world  
and I thought, *There he goes again!* You meant  
shipping containers, borders and civilities of industry.  
Perhaps it is no longer necessary to hope. I have you,  
time-slayer magician who keeps me longing, if not  
distracted recalling places where happy is reflex.  
Or happier. Does it matter how I feel? *Now* intimates a time  
or a condensation of acceptance. As though  
the plants on my kitchen window have free will.  
Someone told me there are babies born without skill  
to thrive; I thought of you. I do not believe things happen  
for a reason, not always. We are helpless against necessities  
where images of time are conjured, not salvaged.

The ancients were wise  
to save renunciation  
for the end. My pain does  
not affect the other,  
not right now. It is  
possible to alter position  
with another as a mother does  
but the lessons get harder  
with age. It is not out of habit  
we take flowers to the river:  
a ritual brings us closer  
to the unknown—the known,  
we guess where they go.  
Repetition (of rituals)  
wherein the hands,  
in time, cease.