

*How a Mother*  
by Leslie Grollman

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*May you live a long life*

—JEWISH SAYING

*I want my life to be something more than long*

—PIPPIN

A stuttering of froth

I mean an embryo in its space sac

its flaccid suit holding a fluid mountain

I mean an embryonic trying to ooze its way human

What bulges become

How salt is pinched

That beginnings house splinters of their end

The weather between ooze and the cry-slap

The whisper between fluttering and the mother

Fractions stretch on a childhood

How our arrows don't parallel

I mean how you tried to curfew a life

Saturn eats regret

its rings, a clean slate  
it spins, scott-free  
like how the specter portals

I coveted the labyrinthine  
A night flicked loosening  
A gravel-filled pit still a cloud  
with too much rain  
Charred remains make headlines  
I uncoiled a snake from my neck I mean a cordon  
of blood-temples and canals a shrine  
Sad eyes scorned like a crisis  
A gesture between diapers and a postcard

I had a craving to swan  
I pirated a midnight  
The cracked marble the room remained itself a hidden else  
Wood warps unattended  
That silver heart I bought you from Tiffany's  
That lapis heart from my favorite place on Bleeker  
Dust fills words nested in stone  
Who knew my heart could squeeze so hard

You opened the oven looking for orange juice  
Sat shuffling little papers as if precious

As if they could ever answer  
or order your world  
How the order of things left you  
You asked what buttons were  
bra on blouse

The way daffodils curl your fingers  
The origami of a disease  
How a body says *no*

The way your eyes forgot my face

That day that last good day  
Splatter searing neurons  
On the balcony tea and snacks in small words and the wind  
You said if Marty were here he'd have us laughing  
he always did that face those jokes  
it never got old  
The weightlessness of joy

The weight of unlived life  
We couldn't have done anything  
I meant to say we couldn't have done anything  
differently

How simple it is  
when our manifestos for distance  
have been forgotten

To know how to revive the dead  
As if my idea of you could ever  
As if any idea of you could ever even