

Every Object a Weapon

by Kami Westhoff

This is a poem about how the ocean loves us back. How its salt-scarred fingers persuade skin to abandon fascia, muscle to untangle from joint, expects even the simplest animals to translate flesh into food, suffer into sleep. How it holds a woman in its dark throat, wombs her warm until the moon slits itself skinny and offers her the shore.

This is a poem about the body. A mother's body. How, long after its instant of last consciousness, it protects its submerged unknowable, like the ribcage does the lungs, the pericardium, its steady, stubborn heart. It protects even without a mouth to shush the fussing, hands to tug tight the car seat's strap or hold the aspirator and clear away what makes breathing labored.

This isn't a poem about a has-everything husband on the cusp of fatherhood who wanted more. Or about a boat, a rope, buckets anchored with twenty pounds of cement, a truck, tarp, electrical tape, thousands of dollars in a duffle bag—every object is a weapon when a man holds it with his hate.

Because this isn't a poem about another murdered woman, I won't tell you her torso resisted the ocean's advances for four months, the unraveling cave of her body kept her son's intact,

umbilical cord attached, his body preserved so his grandparents could see in his face that of their own lost daughter.

This is a poem by a poet who just wants to write poems about the ocean and the mountains. The moon and the stars. The earth's resolve to erupt into spring, the sky's refusal to fall, and how the ocean, even long after we deserve it, insists on loving us back.