

Novae

for K

Kim, Kathleen, & I

Careful not to spill

We flopped onto our backs

Three fiery tongues

Two foxes yawped

Uncoupled,

Lists of lovers—

In a hammock

But not for long . . .

What primal instinct

Despite our pasts, the evidence

Once someone hammered

They must have seemed

One by one they flared

stumbled toward the hammock,

our communal vodka tonic.

& let the netting sway,

below two venerable oaks.

two fields away.

we traded sorrows, mild jokes,

three bodies swapping intimacies

wide enough for two.

when one hopped out to pee,

prodded me to turn toward you

that soon we'd shift again?

ten thousand stars onto heaven.

a permanent creation, till

within fixed constellations, then fell.

Cad

Whatever it was I'd done (or hadn't)
Almost a quarter-century ago,
Her rage erupted when we met by chance
In the coffee shop, each spilled invective
Raw in a room calm with Norah Jones' croon.

The uneasy baristas kept busy
While I scanned the sea of gaping laptops,
Its swift surge of hoisted heads, wondering
If her loathing had boiled up only when
She turned from dropping the crimped straw wrapper

Into the hole brimming with paper cups
To face the man with whom she'd spent one night
(Or less than one night) while her children slept
And her ex Ikea'd his guy condo
In sleek, taupe, post-adulterous closure.

We'd been tending each other's loneliness
However that evening had ended, but
Her snarled word was so 18th century
And ludicrous even as she lobbed it
That laughter broke her vindictive fever,

And we sipped our grande mocha frappés
Among the awake and amused voyeurs
Waiting to see if what had (or had not)
Taken place in the past might swirl around
To clasp us in prophetic happenstance.

The Argument

Tonight I think of the married couple
Living apart in distant states
Who date one night each week:

They dine together via Skype,
Laptops propped on tables, each
Alone in the other's company,

Speaking of students and empathy,
Tempting one another
With plump olives and Chilean reds.

Some nights, too tired to converse,
One angles the Mac before the TV
So they can view together

Anderson Cooper or *The Wire*, season 3.
And so the marriage goes, each
In a state that denies their union,

Each licking lips and fingertips,
Mmm the sea bass, *oooh* the lamb,
The distance between them less

Than the expanse between you
Wounded by words and me
Writing this roundabout apology.

Madam Marie

I do not believe the fortune-tellers—
Their coffee grounds reveal nothing,

Nor do their tarot cards, tea leaves,
The soft inner workings of the rabbit.

The future refuses its snowy vistas
In their prophetic scatterings,

In steam rising from moist dregs,
Though the brief, bird-flash glimpse

Of your absence remains startling,
An augury of separation or death.

In this they have all agreed, the fake
Gypsies who caress my palm, eye

The guilt of my wedding ring.
I lie next to you in our bed, unmoved

By your whispered solicitations,
Knowing nothing will negate the groove

In which the iron wheels of our fate
Spin and will not swerve.

I could send you away, or leave,
And that would confirm their gift.