

Two Poems

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Ravenous

An ocean that she could cross.
Yeasty air fills

her lungs, transformed:
a king with dead wives

in the closet, a cursed
key covered in blood,

a sister pushes another
sister into the river

to drown, a heartbroken
beloved fiddles the wind

and the rain on
her bones. Some mornings

she wakes, and all she knows
is salt on her lips warding

off the serpent's tongue.
She sees how he stepped

back, grabbed at air
to balance himself. She

stepped forward, greened
and teeming, reached with her

strong, rough hands
up into shudder

of branches, wingbeats.
It wasn't, isn't for him

or at the insistence
of any dark force

but for her own damn
pleasure, to know for

herself the taste of
dirt, of seed.

Nine Months Pregnant on the #12 Bus

He storms the #12,
black bell bottoms held up
by a spangled belt,
two sets of glasses taped together,
proclaiming over and over,
My night's just beginning!
I retreat behind my twitching
eyelids, my twitching belly—
the baby? The bus lurches
to a stop. His proclamations
diminish as he steps out.
I open my eyes as we rear out
into traffic. A woman
with horns stuck to her forehead
greets the man, *Dante! Let's go!*
And they go.

My mother carries
the evenings when her mother
invited the priest over for dinner,
cooked fish with its head on,
put out the special china,
sat brittle and vivacious
at the head of the table,
until the priest—content
with the service of his flock—
left and the evenings ended
as they always ended—
this woman she could not
know sitting alone,

presiding over drink
after drink after drink,
as her children disappeared
upstairs.

The next stop is mine,
and I put my hands
to my spine, stand
as straight as I'm able.
I whisper to the child
within me, *there is enough
for both of us.*

Summer gardens collapse
in on themselves, leaves
yellowed, roots tapped out.
I made the same thing for breakfast
as I did yesterday.

I walk the same
uneven sidewalks,
count the same cracks, try not
to break my mother's back.
Streetlights blink on.
Step after step. Step
after step. Beginning,
begin, begun.

