

At Harbin Hot Springs

—before the Valley Fire

Footprint after fire razes a building, a desire.
This: how we arrived, found a meadow, pitched a tent,
arrived again at the baths. No memory of disrobing,
though we must have stepped out of shorts, lifted shirts

over our heads. A day of counterpoint, out of the too hot,
into the cold, and back. Seeing and seen, bodies
of all seasons, all makes, loafed without mention
or wish. Yours, my known. Mine, yours. I wonder:

if we could have stayed in that place, that state, free
of flimsy armor, would we still be two knowns, shaped
by skin alone? And if, staying, we had burst and melded,
the contour of our embrace left in the meadow for history

to ponder, scavenging the ashes for ornaments
that tell, wouldn't that have been, for us
at least, a most generous end—our only trace,
a sweetgum flaming yellow among the pines.

Laying on the Horn

These days I travel by radio, shuttled
and soaring on the traffic report *stall*
on the upper deck of the Richmond Bridge I ease
through junctions and jams, exit for the coast
at 116 *slowdown near Todd Road* or keep north
to Cloverdale, across the county line

where the asphalt changes black to brown
and the whine drops a minor third. I weigh
the mileage, map the turns here to there *mattress*
in the center divide timing the day
for the trip home, though I love the thoughts
that visit me in evening's altered light.

Some are old companions that still surprise
minor crash at the 580 split darts
of longing or shame or thrill that sting
and subside—my usual haul *grass fire*
north of Novato Call me dodger, logistical,
a maestro, electrical, of great symphonies

of motion, but in truth *ladder blocking*
the southbound ramp I am the common kind
of conductor, made of mostly water, ripe
for carrying the charges applied to me.
I convulse in a litany of mild curses
when reception is sporadic, the signal

unsteady. Otherwise, I flow, I flower, I follow
the path of the particles before me, prodded
by those behind, traveling the great highways
geometrical, biological, overwhelmingly happy
to motor along, ear to the woofer, laying
on the horn at the least reported obstruction.

Yoga for Perpetual Beginners

The voice of a woman who is sleepwalking leads you
toward the yoga sanctuary *chaturanga up dog*
down You try to breathe from your center fold
your hands at your heart and be the universal
nonverbal mind but all you can think of
is solzhenitsyn and the political science teacher

with the nasal passage problem who stared
at your minor cleavage decades ago and with pleasure
proclaimed the prisoners *white dogs* the *∂* trapped
and howling in the gloomy cell of his sinuses You try
but your mind roams the gulag where the snow is ochre
muck and the sky hangs so low you can barely stand

Words you can't pronounce or imagine spelled out
march by in her mellifluous song his adenoidal snarl
california meets psychopolitico in the solitude
of siberia *inhale exhale let all tension*
go Slowly the incense calms you and the tuneless flute
carries you from crimea to the canyonlands *breathe*

Thought's sinews loosen until you realize your hands
are way off center and you've been breathing
not into your heart but into your right breast the one
the wide-awake doctors hold and stick and photograph
and you suppose maybe she is right: your heart is not
an organ but that unspoken sense inside you

that knows strength abides with weakness
sharp with soft *ba* with *tba* And suddenly
you arrive at a place of unbearable happiness

Down dog move compassionately enter
the sanctuary inside your *subkava bodhe*
vacant as a windswept steppe then gently
like a song enfolds its sparrow bring
your hands together at your heart
wherever — here now — that may be