

SONJA SWIFT

I will
trespass
into the
orchard
and steal
a nectarine
for you

The texture of night on a ridgetop is cavernous & wet
I am on night watch when the dolphins arrive
silk bodies outlined by phosphorescence
awe is an ember
starlight
blackness of space quilted by cross-stitch & magnetism
the universe is expanding
can you hear it?
I am varnishing the blank page in a tack room full of hay dust & mouse shit
calculating the angle of fire upturned by swollen air
I am drenched in salt water
the smell of eucalyptus soothing
walking into a minefield the sun red and low
they don't care if I die here that's why there are no signs
I am standing in the banal faux-leather overly air-conditioned
board room of [fill in the blank] headquarters asking why?
What the hell for?
I am watching waves curl
tethered to a five-hundred-year-old oak tree up the neighbors rutted out
back road past the mugwort
indian paintbrush & sticky monkey flower
I am scarred from coral sharp as switchblade
pixilated
seven years old barefoot and bareback confused by the sound
of whiskey and gunfire
I am rawhide
painted cliffs
the agave big as a taco truck in the front yard of that Oakland stucco adobe
I am mesquite
tincture of elderflower
staring into the space between the green glass of an olive oil bottle
and the black wick
of a beeswax candle
On a purple mesa I watch the moon rise
translate the sound of night
into Arabic
I see myself in my mother's gestures
in the shallow of a thimble carved from musk ox horn
anvil shape of a thunderhead approaching
taste of turmeric & ginger heat
lentil soup on a cold day
fresh-squeezed lime
I am sequined
the universe blinking

Sonja Swift writes toward a place of understanding both of herself and of our world. She has publications in *Dark Matter: Women Witnessing*, *Langscape Magazine*, *Rock & Sling*, and *Broad Street*, and a chapbook of prose poems called *Alphabet Atlas* published by Deconstructed Artichoke Press. She calls home San Francisco, California, and the Black Hills, South Dakota.

expanding still expanding
I am counting plumage on Quetzalcoatl
even the city smells sweet after it rains
I carry turquoise with me
I carry matches with me
I carry a pendent carved out of elk antler
ground coffee & blank paper & moonshine
I am asking that you speak plainly
No tulips please no rosaries
I am walking cement late at night and a man asleep under cardboard bellows
may god be with you!
I am piñon
I am sorry
blood cell & sinew
I will not tell you it's gonna be okay when it isn't
I will dance
I am the doe you took for an apparition
cougar's paw prints in wet ground I followed for a mile on the ridge road where the manzanita grows
blood bark with translucent flowers like miniature paper lanterns
abandoned city of Pripyat where wolves live and catfish grow old in forsaken canals
lone sick dolphin in the Gowanus Canal
I am the daughter of a Danish immigrant who loves chardonnay and six shooters
she was always the best shot
I am the pattern geese make when they migrate
The universe will never cease expanding
I am stargazing
dynamite
gold mining requires cyanide
diamond mines crush rock
make mountains out of tailings
blue-belly lizard doing push-ups on a hot slab of granite
spiderweb catching dew
I am awake
ready to take my turn at night watch
one hand on the rudder