



"Flower on Copper-bottomed Pan"  
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If you only want to live with surfaces . . .  
*for V. M.*

Does the armless starfish doubt the tide's return  
when it leaves for the moon's embrace?

If you untied the scars in your face  
would your heart truly fall apart?

Water never dies  
in order to become the wave.

So, what happens to the soul  
who fears thirst and its water?

And before you leave, tell me,  
how will you sail across your Pacific  
without entering the sea or sky?

## Brief Letter

*for M. J. Vaughn and A. Gelhaus*

Remember that afternoon when we met by chance  
among the tall grass of the hills outside the city?  
I was hiking, half-naked, up to Coyote Point and carrying  
the body of a blue-belly lizard in my right palm.  
We marveled at its abdomen, like a soft purse,

the twin paths of blue more lustrous than the afternoon sky.  
We continued on, together. I carried the lizard,  
caressing a secret in the tail as if I were a boy again.  
The tiny claws, their sharp points, able to find purchase  
in any surface. Later, alone, I noticed the mouth was sealed  
shut with a crust of blood and dirt.

Yes, it was shock, almost stepping on the gopher snake.  
I mistook her for a shadow and then a ribbon of ash,  
while further ahead, the king snake lying in the late  
sunlight and offering his gifts of rings.  
How they immediately silenced us! We stood motionless,  
beholding them as they both glided over the dirt, entering  
the grass without a sound or even lifting their heads  
to negotiate the change in terrain. So completely easy.  
And to hell with us if we didn't get it.

I have to admit that I wasn't interested in pointing out  
the buildings and boulevards of the panorama of San Jose  
or finding my home in relation to the shopping mall.  
I was listening to the stillness abiding all around us  
while glimpsing two lovers embracing down in the fields,  
naked, almost indistinguishable from the light warming our backs.  
Or maybe just the light and fields loving each other and us  
as we pass through, wearing a new skin of salt, thirsty,  
slightly burned.

P. S.    The lizard we left under the manzanita  
          is gone, replaced by these two crow feathers  
          which is what I wanted  
          to happen and which I send to you.  
          The colors in their night, like secret  
          truths, are the lustrous cloaks of thieves  
          from the desert, come to steal our valuables  
          that we might find the luminous clues  
          to where it all  
          is

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