

## A BARTERED BOOKCASE TRAVELS BLOCKS

The sun can't reach us this morning. Instead, sour  
stone, exhaust, roof tar creeps over the windowsill.

You unlock an arm from my chest, roll the hour  
into blanket and sheet, my body a shadowed still

exposed on the hardwood floor, unlike the shades  
nestled in book covers, sofa pillows, the crease

of your bent knees. I rise. My silhouette trades  
floor for parted window. I shut it, notice grease

stains on the opposite brick walls, a perfect grid  
quickenning into squares and rectangles, the glass

reflecting oily glass. The air quivers, girders hid  
by pigeons as they roost, this vent a bird class-

room, observation deck, human television, a fish  
bowl of digestion, repose, adhesion. I turn, strain

my neck to see a glimpse of eggshell in a blue dish  
how fire escape utensils cut precise pieces, rain

gutter a pillar in this vaulted kitchen, *trompe l'œil*  
breakfast ceiling. Sun strokes a rusty water tank,

a peaked cone, a red pipe cap, and you stir, loyal  
friend, as if the sun broken above us, on the rank

rooftops of tiny, overpriced apartments, broke  
only for us, the feeling heady, like funhouse

mirrors : distorted reflections, the convex spoke  
and concave joke of Manhattan. Sun, douse

us with your indiscriminate light, touch plastic  
crates in the alley, touch dumpster, access door

loading dock, moss and cigarettes, our drastic  
love in Amy and Jonah's apartment. I moor

myself in your bay, carry this anchor into day  
a cold November Sunday, where, in short hours

on Columbus, Amy and I will clear the way  
for you and Jonah, knuckles the color of flour

as you carry his bartered bookcase from the flea  
market to their stoop that spills out onto Broad-

way's surges at the corner of West 69<sup>th</sup>. Chelsea  
to Harlem, Murray Hill to Morningside, sun prods

us into each other, our bodies an X on the city;  
joints creak and pop, wrist and ankle reach for you,

sun, the way I reach for you, Brian, for your witty  
line, *like ants carrying leaves back to their mound*, too

tired to care if your hand strayed also to mine  
there in front of the Lincoln Center fountain, our

heat frozen in Amy's camera as we rode red line  
one downtown and rose into the purple hour.

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