

WHISPER MY NAME

It always happens this way:
you leave and drive to the end
of the street, a million ways
you can turn, north, south,
west, then you're gone,
and I stand at an open window
tearing up these pages,
sailing them after you, to you,
and their sound, rising and falling,
is like a whisper, a cry, your name
lost in my body, some uncertainty
behind it, some question
that would make you turn around:
I just wanted to ask you again.

We'll haunt each other--
how else to say it?
We're that other kind of ghostly,
all flesh, filled with gravity,
we bump into walls and doors,
can't ever get out of our graves.
Our bodies hold us like tombs,
inside something still growing
quiet but wild: hair and fingernails.
If only the dead could learn
to keep warm, to dig themselves out,
if only the dead could need each other
the way we still do.

On Friday nights, leaving town,
there's a cemetery we drive past,

the cars' lights flicker bloodred
over the gravestones, like voices,
the dead talking to each other
in fits and whispers of light--
the same question, always new:
how did it happen?
how did you come to be here
next to me, your eyes wide open?
I just wanted to ask you again
about that quiet at the last minute,
the instant after something's gone

Tonight, there's a wreck ahead, a fire,
a helicopter taking up the injured man.
In our own heads, we hear him:
it's like flying, he says, I'm not ready,
mistaking copter blades for angels
as they chop at the stars.
We see the talk in the graveyard,
see the dead ache of his ascension,
and feel them to be better than we are:
how the dust of their bones billows
up when they touch, when they cry out,
how sweetly they whisper each other's names.