

## Solstice

We make it through this herby darkness on horses  
made of water, not glass, though we stay dry  
and do not breathe any of the dirt that can change  
the strength we use to hold a flower.

We tense our thighs against the flanks, knowing  
we could relax our bodies, we who keep our nails  
short enough to make a fist, fit our fingers around paper  
cups to see yellow flowers branching to full height.

We are the ones who say nothing without purpose  
and mostly everything in vain. We play with language  
like children, small hands poking the glass of a bus  
to prove how well they belong in the set world,

how often they can make themselves laugh.

We don't need to remember our other lives but,  
now we have remembered, the horses have left  
and there are only the backs of wooden chairs for us

to straddle and contend with the length of our arms,  
our need to be musical and indulgent against the weight  
on our chests. We make a poker with our tongues,  
though the scentless air of our carrying left already

a long while ago, and you recline until your back lands  
on the firm softness of white sheets, poise yourself  
to teach me I should sit at the back of an aeroplane,  
where I won't see the wings in moments of turbulence.

Now I see you better, and I seat myself next to you.

I want to tell your unsmiling face I understand, and I do.

I understand. It is painful to remember our wings,  
preened and responsive, are not really ours,

are really part of a remorseless body that will expel us  
so we are no longer riders on horses made of water,  
so we are chargeless like a poet's final words, like love  
with its coffered ceiling for your breaths,

suddenly shallow and stunted, to settle  
before we can stay a little longer to play with voice  
so we may find the right pitch with which to live,  
then die.