

A Collection of Altered States

Kira Legaan

The Sestina of Degeneration

if my buckled body could talk it would
stutter and twitch, wail and moan,
sliced up and scarred, my stain
would land hard, soak the resined floor
blanched under years of bone,
fighting its way through,

there were threads to cut through.
at first my heart was wood
my skin bittered and burnt, my moan
flew out, next to the stain
his hand had left on the floor —
his smile the colour of bone

my teeth rattled — brittle as bone —
china, slippery red surging through
like a wounded branch of birch wood
my paved tongue a black moan,
my ragged lungs a warm stain
to worship one man's flaw.

they found me on the floor
one Friday, a broken bone
and yellow fear snaking through
the room, the way it would
most days, a long slow moan
spilling its way through the stains

they found on the stain —
less steel bars in the corner.
he had left no prints, only the bone
meal bruises on my ankles, and through —
out the place a smell of sandalwood
rode the air, incense with a hint of moan

my fingernails gave voice to the moan
in my liver, no scratch, no bloodstain
marked his lair, just the buckle of floor
boards where he would
leave me to stare at the bone
dry crust of rage poking through

my only flaw was the warped wood
that ran, stain washed and straight through
to bone — I have no memory of its moan.

Shadowboxing

I have an ache
sharp edged and hollow
like the voice of my mother.
I have her eyes
and her first wedding ring,
both look older than they should.

She always lied
when asked about the cellar.
But I still have teeth
chipped at an angle and
questions that crouch in the corner
beside the washer they never repaired.

When speaking
Victoria's lips would curl like springs
consonants brisk on the palate, bitter.
Leaving her mouth
as empty as ash.
Shadows hiding under her tongue.

We were aliens
dancing together
around a man who would be king.
My breath
arrived at Christmas
but left soon after, a whole family by its side.

No broken animal

There's a she wolf
inside — she is
feral red heart
underbelly and
fisted claw

she shits and spits
and spider brown
crouches — splayed out
moaning like her
skin is the blaze

dripping bile onto
concrete — she is
craven and hungry
black lies
harden her tongue

coiled fur to the
ceiling — she is
bone cage un-bruises
as she waits
for the sound of

his feet on the floor.