

The Flood

ELIZABETH UNDERWOOD

I wake
and I am alive
but the wine in my glass
from the night before
is dead.

Lots of things are dying in the morning.
Fragile things, like my marginal grasp on reality,
the lace structure of a seasoned leaf,
the color of your eyes.
All are swept away and lost.
Drowned, in this high season of storm.

News Guy last night said
maybe the prophets lied about the Flood,
maybe the world will be destroyed a second time
by water, and not hellfire after all.
It's been nine weeks of water now,
and a year without you.
Loss saturates the hours.

My mind will not move from death
and rebirth, death and rebirth.
The Phoenix is taken down by water this time,
then rises from the deep, drenched.
This time, he begins just like we do—
wearing a thin film of liquid
at the beginning of life.

I can't stop thinking of twigs broken,
 leaves torn from their bodies,
 insects swimming to their fate—
 and of dormant seeds bursting,
 incorrigible flowers budding,
 forgotten redwoods,
 drunk with a flash of vibrant green,
 and cavalier blades of grass,
 swashbuckling, with certain life
 from all this water.

News Guy today says
 there's a man on the edge
 of a very high bridge.
 He's going to jump.
 Wants to meet his end at the waterline,
 but wants a priest before he goes.
 I say: hey, just jump.

Out in the galaxy of my morning,
 there is nothing but death and renewal.
 Both are rampant and everywhere.
 Drowning and new life stitched together
 with the thread of wet weeds—
 a brilliant reversible tapestry.

I wake
 and find myself wet
 with the memory of a walk
 on the beach
 in this much rain.