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.