

THE SHIPWRECKED HOUSE

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The Shipwrecked House

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Penned in the Margins

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i.m. Anna Delicia Coatalen

The
Shipwrecked
House

Origin Story

They were to place seaweed in my cot
so that I'd grow with nets for hands
to better haul mica-strewn salmon.
Mistletoe-of-the-sea raised on the back
of crabs, collected at midnight for luck.

Instead, they brought me heather's bells
dangled noiselessly to taunt the crush
of my potato fists. They sewed its scales
into my skin, hushed my cries, taught
me that it grows where others cannot.

The Shipwrecked House I

The ceiling is tugged by the moon
it expands above us, an opaque dome
through which we guess the stars.

Other ships will be built from these rooms,
other seas and currents eroded by a figurehead.

Walls tremble violet-blue, weave the song
of seagulls into their granite veins.
An empty wine glass fills with cowries.

My mother twists her ring like a weathervane,
east to west; still the sun refuses to set.

Cowries are claimed from the sand;
fingers sniffle through broken claws.

We hinge the stones in pools to watch life
dart out and hide beneath other shelters.

The glass fills but is still half empty.
Ironed darned sheets cover old mattresses that spill
over the frames of beds.

And Cesária Évora sings of homesickness.

Wreck

After George Gunn

no Atlantis this forest of debris
twigs dulled by the sanding of stream
trunks edited by the tenuous

ships have been misplaced in its filing system
traces of light fade fast
smells are swallows too fast to track

opaque but not peaceful
the skittering of memories punctures
and steals another layer of paint

or another thread from the curtain

Whales

Whales lived under our house,
making the hinges rock, splitting cups and cheeks.

Stray socks melted in their comb-mouths
their fins sliced through conversations,
we found bones in our cups of tea.

Most of the time they just wanted to play
bounced against bookshelves, snorted leaks,
threw bodies across the room.

No one believed me of course,
the carpet looked too smooth to hide a mammal.

At night, I'd listen to their song
beat through the floorboards
like slashes of headlights.

For days they'd circle the house
take a dive into the cellar, press the doorbell
and run, I'd sometimes forget then trip
over the carcass of one beached
in the gutter.