

LEE SHARKEY

Clarity and Compassion

Let the cat be the cat, sprawled on her back, her belly stretched out in the sun.

Let the man be the man, asleep in his chamber, legs tucked, soundless, so I wonder

is he breathing, and will this never end. Let me forgive myself

for thoughts that come and go and come and go again

for pyramids of bone climbing into the azure.

Let the dead stay dead.

Let us escape to the forest, where we survive on berries and seeds.

Equal and opposite pressures keep me upright.

My mother, a painter of icons, had teeth flecked with lapis from licking her tiny brush.

My other mother worked in a factory painting radium numbers on watch faces.

She waited in the cold for her bus until the buses stopped running.

I loved her more than gold but coveted her small gold earrings.